

TOWARD AN ONTOLOGY OF POP MUSIC

Samuel George Acres

Hons., (First Class). Media Arts. RMIT.

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

University of Tasmania.

January 2014.

Declaration of Originality

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, and to the best of my knowledge no material previously published or written except where due acknowledgement is made, nor does the thesis contain material that infringes copyright.

Samuel George Acres: _____

Authority of Access

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

Samuel George Acres: _____

Dedicated to my mother, Clair.

Happy birthday.

Abstract.

To arrive at an ontology of pop music this project considers what is constant as regards the concern of works, not merely sound or composition. This being the case, individual works are apprehended prior to their being absorbed into a socio-cultural/historical context, such that the in-itself of the work is the domain of this project, which by way of the works being autographic, speaks to a singularness and deliberateness in their construction. This aspect of autography is reflected in the method used to analyse such works, and in doing so leaves to history and sociology the historical and sociological, which is a departure from conventional modes of analysis.

The originality of this project lies firstly in its aim and secondly in the method used to achieve that aim. It seems that a disproportionate amount of popular music analysis—by ignoring for example Backstreet Boys or Boy George—suggests implicitly that pop music is either unpopular, or unworthy of an academic exploration. It is this paradoxical oversight, or unwillingness to engage with pop music—perhaps by way of a high/low split within popular music studies itself—that renders this study of pop music original.

Central to this project is the observation that since any analysis of sound is in the first instance an analysis of what can be remembered, the method employed must seek to address this issue. As such, the formulation of a detailed internal map of a work on the part of the analyst is required. This process and its inherent limitations are explicated herein. This entails that a distinction be made between what we can hear—which itself is determined by playback

technology, circumstance, and direction of attention—and the information that that sound is derived from, such that each work comes to be known through the conveyance of information committed to some medium. It is to this specific arrangement of information by way of its being made audible that the analysis is directed.

That pop music sounds different at different points in history leads to the observation that there can be pop music in any number of ways. To extrapolate: pop songs are pop songs to varying degrees, such that a particular pop song could be said to be *symptomatic* of pop music proper, so that a pop song is considered to be a token in light of the type, pop music. The distinction is crucial. This study provides an analysis of how pop music arrives at its shifting sonic palate; how this palate is manifested in a way different to that of its source, and why this is so; and how this adoption and reconfiguration pertains to pop music's fundamental nature in light of a planned obsolescence.

Key notions for this project are: Stockhausen's conception of the Moment, framed here in such a way as to become an analytical tool; ideas about a 'sonic surface' and its link with the identity of the pop song; the connection between the condition of the jingle and pop music; the importance of the single—from the 7" to the digital download—and a concomitant concern with the present that speaks to the notion of a planned obsolescence.

Considering that the findings of this project pertain the fundamental nature of pop music, they are able to be fed back into more traditional methods of popular music analysis, given that what is fundamental to pop music should be constant under any method of

analysis. Additionally, any study that takes music as its subject is an inherently musicological one, even though this study treats pop music *sonico-structurally*: without recourse to musical scores, lyrics analysis, or sonograms. The works under consideration are treated as merely sound over some duration, since to consider them otherwise is to provide scope to overlook their temporal nature. It will be clear to the reader, then, that this project does not seek to expand *outwardly* from the existing pop music discourse, rather it seeks to extend *inwardly* to the minutiae of sound's being organised in specific ways. Frith's sociology, Gracyk's aesthetics and Middleton's reading of musicology mark the outermost limits of the territory covered, and it is with these as delimiters that a conceptual triangulation is able to occur at finer and finer resolutions. Paramount is the notion that any observation, be it drawn from an abstract arithmetic or from some interstitial magnification, is in the first place able to be heard.

So it is by a gradual process of exclusion—by in part reversing those claims made to support rock music as against pop music—simultaneous with the explication of the method herein, that we come to fully understand the concerns exhibited by particular works that align with what it mean for a song to be a pop song. For this, certainly, is beyond sound and the organisation thereof.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
INTRODUCTION.....	10
MUSICOLOGICAL CONCERN.....	13
THE SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF POPULAR MUSIC.....	18
TECHNOLOGY AND POPULAR MUSIC.	24
THE POPULAR MUSIC INDUSTRY.....	28
CONCLUSION.....	31
METHODOLOGY.....	36
MICRO ASPECT.....	38
MACRO ASPECT.....	52
CHAPTER 1.....	66
LISTENING.....	66
PARALLEL CACHE MEMORY LISTENING.....	68
MAPS AND VOCABULARY.....	76
THE SOUND OF POP MUSIC.....	80
ADOPTION AND RECONFIGURATION.....	84
COVERS.....	90
CHAPTER 2.....	97
STOCKHAUSEN’S ‘MOMENT.’	97
JINGLES.....	111
THE POP SONG’S IDENTITY.....	118
CHAPTER 3.....	125
NOTES ON TRANSPARENCY, DEPTH, AND SURFACE, AS REGARDS SOUND.....	125

WHAT THE POP SONG DOES: CONSTANCY AND ACTIVITY	130
CONSERVATISM, SAFETY, AND THE CONDITION OF THE JINGLE	141
CHAPTER 4.	153
THEORY IN PRACTICE.....	154
CONCLUSIONS.	168
LIMITATION.....	168
PRESENCE AND OBSOLESCENCE.	171
EXAGGERATION, LISTENING.	174
INDUSTRY.....	177
CONTESTATION.	178
FUNDAMENTS AND THE ‘MOMENT’.....	180
JINGLES AND POP SONGS.	184
ONTOLOGY.	189
APPENDIX 1.....	193
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	203
ELECTRONIC AND AUDIO/VISUAL MATERIAL.....	211
CD.1 TRACK LIST.....	213
CD.2 TRACK LIST.....	213

INTRODUCTION.

There is much noise that surrounds pop music discourse and it stretches from the banal and the innocuous to the critical, much as one would expect from something so enmeshed, so ubiquitous in contemporary Western culture—in popular culture, perhaps. It would not be too long a bow to draw to suggest that one would have to actively seek respite from its ubiquity: from television advertisements for pre-faded jeans and cheap electronic goods to shop fronts on the high street and telephone ‘hold’ music. But is this a part of the condition of pop music, or is it merely that pop music is capable of fulfilling these roles, that it is adequate for some task? There is much fog to sift through.

Pop music has changed since the 1950’s, where 2-track magnetic tape and the microphone—where technology—first afforded its seeds. And although it may be after some initial difficulty that we can come to hear The Hollies in Justin Bieber, we can certainly hear pop music in each; that each is *of* pop music we should be able to say with some certainty. Pop music’s mask is fluid. For, pop music changes, and will perhaps be unrecognisable in years to come—as it no doubt is now to someone who grew up with the Shangri-Las—but this is not to say that it is no longer pop music; merely that it has moved on, leaving old audiences with old music, giving new audiences new music, and taking from the present that it finds itself in sound and device that speak to that present.

What peculiar alchemy sustains it? What is *underneath*? The task at hand is to find out, On what apparatus is that mask hung? So, first, a distinction is made on the order of types and tokens, and like some alien metal we seek to understand its make-up at a molecular level.

But to get at this apparatus we must first strip away a number of externalities: remove the mask. We ask, simply, *What if?* What if we were to subtract costume, performance, geography, biography and history? What if we were to suspend sociological and musicological analysis? (Would we then be able to hear pop music proper, or can there be no such thing once stripped of these aspects?) We want to know, what is it that is being presented to us, not what we can take from it, for that, necessarily, is *after* what *it is*; is a result of it being that particular thing. Perhaps we could even say that this project is prior to sociology, prior to any audience or demographic. From this perspective it is possible to show that one of the primary concerns of pop music is precisely this apparatus, or indeed, that this apparatus, and what it can be configured to shoulder is, essentially, the root of all pop music; the number of possible permutations of this ‘code’ is infinite, and these are the pop songs, the many masks that pop music is able to wear. So, of a particular pop song we ask, What contained herein is symptomatic of pop music? And instantly we are no longer asking if a song is or is not a pop song, but to what degree can pop music be evidenced in particular songs.

So the rate at which pop music changes should not be a hindrance to our understanding of it, so long as we are cognizant of this as being a fundamental aspect of it. This provides the first inroads to the fundamental nature of pop music: that change is constant means we can subtract that which is changing—the mask—from our list of potential fundamentals, leaving us simply with change, fluidity, as constant and fundamental. There is, however, a rationale for the fluidity of this mask—for the sound/appearance of pop music—and it is built into pop music’s foundations, into its DNA. Here, instead of enquiring as to the *what* of a sound, we are concerned with what it means to in the first place use that sound, and later abandon that

sound. Change, *and the rationale for that change*, is constant. Presentation, pronouncement is key.

To consider this point from a slightly different angle, we could say that pop songs from different decades are simply different ways of there being pop music. It is this split between pop music all, and individual pop songs that provides much of the impetus for the ensuing analysis.

This project takes place inside a narrow band of conceptual algebraic constants (these constraints will become evident to the reader as the project progresses, and are, in a broad sense, introduced in the next chapter). The benefit of working within such strict limits is the level of magnification/detail that this affords. For, when we chose to work in such a way there is—implicitly afforded—the analytical scope to explore those constants, the space between them, and the application thereof, that reaches from the specific to the abstract, from the micro to the macro, extrapolating to the point where the very mettle of the constants themselves is tested. As with an electron-microscope, we can ‘zoom in’ to greater levels of magnification than would otherwise be possible, and the more we do zoom in, what we come to observe—no matter how it may differ from observations drawn from different angles or resolutions—will necessarily still be *of* that which is under the lens. And by considering pop music from multiple vantage points/angles, we at least attempt to account for parallax error, which results from drawing observations based on a single vantage point. While it is not possible within the scope of this project to view pop music from *all* angles, the hope is that if one were so inclined, the parentheses about which this project is conducted could be pushed outward to incorporate (in the first instance) phonography, and from there, with only slight modification, extend to musicology and sociology, and further, to other musics. For example,

by way of sociological analysis, we are able to understand the relationships that people have with certain musics; what the music is capable of speaking to an audience, and what that audience then does with that information. Here, in sociology, we are talking about what we can read from a thing's being, firstly arrived at after a particular fashion, then later transmitted and later still received, where it is the music that is the vessel for whatever transactions take place, and including in it—retrospectively/-actively as per the listener's specific interest—how that thing came into being. So to sociology, it is a thorough understanding of that signal that could be adopted. To musicology, an approach that does not rely on notation—on listening *through* sound to get to the score—that could be given, in an attempt to lure musicologists back form—for the most part—classical music.

At the very least, even the contestation of the points made herein should enliven whatever discourse they happen to be taken up by. Pop music is something that continues to fascinate me, and while it is perhaps inappropriate to rail against the countless journal articles dedicated to, say, the lyrics of Bob Dylan, or the perennial reworking/rephrasing/application of Adorno's essays on popular music, I cannot help but feel disenfranchised by such endeavours. Why is it that Backstreet Boys, for example, receive little to no academic consideration? Is it merely some perceived high/low split; the same one that leads sociology to considerations of techno or rock music, and musicology to classical music? When considered as sound-over-time, such splits are rendered null and void, for *sound in itself* is neither good nor bad, and none more valid than another.

The 'Ontology' of the title of this project I define as: the fundamental nature of the thing in question as evidenced by the tenets that underlie and inform its activity at any and all turns. Pop music itself is a highly contestable term and I make the assumption that it is

neither an abbreviated form of the term ‘popular music’—too contestable a term itself—nor is it a music aimed at youth, a term which is itself also contestable. Here, the working assumption is that if something could be said to be fundamental to a thing’s nature, then that trait should be able to be evidenced at any point in said thing’s timeline. Of course, since technology and its usage change as decades go by, and since the sound of autographic works—one of the provisions for being able to say that something is possibly pop music is that it first be an autographic work—is dictated largely by this usage/change, *sound itself* is not strictly a part of the ontology. However, once we acknowledge this we arrive at the observation that particular works’ sound’s form a relationship to other works’ sound’s of that period. From this we arrive at the importance of both internal and external relationships: those made within a work, and how that work relates to the landscape into which it was issued: its *present*. It will be clear now that the strive toward the fundamental nature of pop music is ephemeral to a degree much greater than that of simply sound, itself complicated by the observation that any interrogation of sound is firstly an interrogation of one’s own memory. Thus we work—explicitly—*Toward* that ontology. The hope is that this project comprises but a step in said *Toward*, with the aforementioned complications being the obstacles that cannot be surmounted in a project such as this.

It will be clear to the reader that this project is for the most part an explication of a method, such that the whole of the method, what pop music is, and the ontology thereof are arrived at near simultaneously. We arrive at this strange nexus by traveling inward as about concentric circles; many of the points that are investigated require that tangents thereof be addressed before moving on. Once we begin to think about what defines pop music, the more problematic defining it becomes, and initially I had notions that this was to be found by way

of an exploration into what youth is, what adolescence is. This, though, proved inadequate as I tried to make connections between the adolescent mind and its neuro-chemical fireworks, ‘the now’, psycho-geography, and the activity of pop songs—taken then as merely that which I assumed pop songs to be, though functioning as something akin to what may—and with some trepidation—be called a ‘meta-folk’ music: borrowing and combining sound and structure from disparate geographico-social sources. Even though aware that youth and adolescence were different things entirely, they each seemed to me to conjure a vitality and a certain futility that related directly to time’s passing, and an urge to prolong the present. This idea found a weak echo in the use of the fade-out at the end of many pop songs, where I had postulated that the fade-out could be likened to the song’s extending beyond the horizon, continuing *ad infinitum* although unheard, the Earth’s curve corresponding directly to the shape of the fade-out; and how this was a call to the listener to ‘bring the song back’ into their memory. Enforcing this idea in an albeit skewed manner, was that the fade-out is also where many songs reached their crescendo, their maximum density, thus heightening this sense of (imagined) prolongation as the song fades out. The tinges of romanticism that I recognised in these ideas meant that they could not be sustained, and nor were the places that they were evidenced the exclusive province of pop music. Of course, the fade out was merely an opportunity to have a song continue to play beneath the radio DJ’s announcements, giving them prolonged air-time, more presence/exposure.

Another constant that we can eliminate from the analysis is the attuned audience member. The specific, culturally imbedded/relevant, historically located listener. For the pop song to ‘make sense’, the listener must be at least partially familiar with the sonic and structural tropes that it exhibits; they will have been previously exposed to them. In the case where they are unfamiliar, a subsequent song—either chronologically by release date, or in

the history of their personal listening—that uses those same or similar devices will fill this role, and that song will have an air of familiarity, albeit abstractly, not specifically. The key to this point is not the listener, however, but pop music’s relationship with the present. Histories musical and social are only causally related. Pop music’s concern—in part—is the Moment of the pop song, and that moment is continuous. So too is the listener of the present continuous, in that the present houses the listener: this listener is abstract and shares the same moment as the pop song. When framed like this, we need only consider the listener abstractly, and assume of them what the pop song assumes of them, namely, that they are present. And in doing so, implicitly allow that anyone may enjoy pop music, not just that privileged listener.

In the first instance there must be listening. No matter the methodology, when sound is the subject, listening, and the awareness of one’s own listening, are the tools necessary to make any observations. If the listening itself is misguided, then whatever is concluded from those listenings is correspondingly misguided. (We see also that a sonogram—the graphic representation of sound activity—is not arrived at through listening, but through certain algorithms.) My listening is my own, certainly, but the information that allows that listening is—under the reckoning of this project—constant: it is prior to the different physiological/psychological constitutions of the listener. That is, it is information that we all have access to, though we may observe it differently, and that it is the same information that is committed to the various media that the song is stored—albeit stored in those media specific ways. The pitch of abstraction that this project is conducted at is a means to address these discrepancies. It can be thought of as the difference between listening to a song, and listening to how a timeline is articulated by organised and deliberate sound, and the action of

that sound. As such, much of this project is focussed on *listening to* pop music, since it is from listening that this problem, given in sound over time, can be approached. This is the basis for much of abstract nature of the discussion contained herein, for it is through this abstraction that it is possible to circumvent the temptation to rely on a largely adjectival vocabulary for sound. The method also makes it possible to conduct the project without recourse to the mention of traditional musical notation or scores because these are contained in sound's activity—in its *sounding*—and are only relevant to discussions conducted at that remove from sound.

Given all of this conflicting and speculative information, one may reasonably inquire as to where, exactly, this project starts with regard to works that are deemed to be pop songs. Does one somehow intuit a starting point, some initial indisputable pop song, and on what assumptions is that intuition based? How is it that one seemingly easily assumes Backstreet Boys or Madonna to be indicative of pop music, and La Monte Young not? How is it possible to justify this—on first glance—unfounded assumption? But it is from this quandary that the notion of 'degree' arises once more, and from this we are able to say that since the songs are different, the degree to which they could be said to be one thing more than, or opposed to, another necessarily differs. Given this—perhaps the most obvious of notions—there is the realisation that once we assume pop music to be some vague sort of data set, itself *beyond* the sonic, given rather as *intent*—it is possible to evidence pop music in most anyplace. How then does one narrow this clearly broad spectrum? The method here is crude and is based on assumption: how does Sun Ra differ from ABBA, how does Franz Schubert differ from Lady Gaga, how do the Ramones differ from Justin Bieber; and further still, how are the variables arrived at in each of these contrasts? For this we have to step outside of the strict bounds of

this project—broach sociological territory—and assume that somehow pop music, as it would be in large, emboldened type, is that which via industrial channels makes its way to you, who is in turn tuned in to—or accesses—said industrial channels either directly or indirectly. The broadest of channels: television, magazines, radio, internet, shop-front speakers, and so on. These latter variables are arrived at by asking simply, What is this playing? And why no Franz Schubert, Sun Ra, Ramones? We circle by smaller and smaller radii—buoyed by the idea that as regards intent there must be some difference between these examples and what pop music may be—and approach an area that is admittedly ill defined; perhaps without a definite centre. This we can say with certainty because at the core of what it means to be pop music we do not find sounds but *concerns* and *intent*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION.

This literature review, which, although it cannot be exhaustive of the whole field of popular music analysis, is designed to highlight those points of discussion that allow this project to enter popular music discourse, and, further, that that discourse can be viewed in such a way as to distinguish pop music from music that is merely popular. I have attempted to guide this literature review toward the field of study most closely aligned with the ideas presented in this thesis: phonography. But phonography is only the starting point. This is because phonography asks questions that relate to recorded sound: it is not simply that there is some sound to be considered, but *how* it is that there is such sound. From this point, we can begin to theorise as to the *why* of that *how*, and then to the *to what end* is there such sound/action (these questions being beyond the bounds of phonography). This places autographic concern at the forefront of the ensuing discussion, which, again, is essentially a précis of the major points in the popular music discourse. This literature review, then, is by and large exclusionary, and for the most part casts rock music (analysis) as the standard bearer for popular music (analysis) since it receives a greater portion of academic consideration than most other popular musical type. There is also a subtle under-current of synonymy between pop- and popular music that exists in popular music analysis. So it is with some trepidation that the key points in popular music analysis are approached here, for, for them to be applicable to pop music often requires that they at least undergo some transposition or a near inversion given the initial hypothesis that pop music differs from popular music. And since pop music is somewhere, and in some way, under the umbrella

term Popular Music—or at the very least, encroaches on the same space—using popular music analysis as a starting point is valid. Further, the ill-defined boundaries between the two means that for all intents and purposes, popular music analysis is the only valid starting point.

The first section, on musicology, is included primarily because so much criticism is leveled toward it, though, paradoxically, any study that takes music as its primary concern must necessarily be a musicological one. So much pop music relies on non-notatable sound events/instantiations for its individuation that an analysis of notation will at almost no point yield an understanding of the heard recording: the difference between allographic and autographic (phonographic) works. Musicology (in its traditional sense) is included here as an opposition; musicological concern approaches an almost binary opposition in so far as it has the capacity to treat autographic recordings as allographic. If I take musicology proper as being furthest from my interests as is possible, then a limit is established, and I can, in a sense, work back from that point. This is a process of exclusion. What musicological analysis provides is part of the (first) ‘what’ in Tagg’s equation—“why and how does who communicate what to whom and with what effect”¹—though instead of the ‘what’ in traditional musicology being notation, it can well be transposed to return shape, sum, difference, articulation, weight. That is, something that focuses on sound as well as design (the autographic). This corresponds with Tagg’s call to allow hermeneutics to be at least acknowledged in musicology.²

¹ Tagg, Philip. "Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice." *Popular Music 2. Theory and Method* (1982): 37-67. 39.

² *Ibid.* 43.

So much of the academic study of popular music is grounded in sociology and its host of derivations. In the same way that musicology is useful as a ground against which this project can develop, so too is sociology; it binds music to a time and place by what it is purported to say about a social climate. Although sociology takes popular music as its subject, it rarely ventures to the analysis of pop music, unless it does so by assuming that pop and rock are synonymous. This is achieved by bridging rock and pop with an abstract concept: youth.³ Further, I feel that the relationship between a musician's biography and recorded sound is tenuous at best: there is no sound to biography. This is not to say that sociology is misguided or irrelevant, just that it is beyond the bounds of this project. What is essentially occurring in this project is a temporary suspension of sociological insight. A most valuable contribution to popular music discourse would be the combination of the findings of this project with sociology. But for this to occur we have to first suspend any disbelief that the two can be separated.

Lastly, sections on technology and industry are included because they are *of* pop music. They are cursory looks at aspects of areas where we can expect to see some of the *how* of pop music. And while they both clearly permeate pop music's brief history, they provide a look at some of the mechanisms that guide sociology and to a lesser extent, musicology.

³ "I am going to call young pop *rock*." Frith, Simon. The Sociology of Rock. London: Constable, 1978. 14.

MUSICOLOGICAL CONCERN.

The “musicological problem”⁴—its inherent notation-centricism—yields a valuable point of entry for pop music analysis: if we accept that “the discursive text [that musicology] constructs, is not the text to which anyone else listens”,⁵ then it becomes clear that what *is* being listened to is what houses the text. Namely, it is that which musicology, due to an “impoverished vocabulary”,⁶ cannot yet surmount: “rhythm, pitch nuance and gradation outside the steps of the diatonic/chromatic system, and timbre”,⁷ as well as irregular rhythms and delays therein, a speeding up and slowing down of tempo, as well as pitch ‘slurs’ and microtonal activity and so on.⁸ Traditional musicology has a tendency toward formalism.⁹ Its height of abstraction is positivist musicology whereby performance is seen as merely a device for disseminating pre-existing musical objects,¹⁰ such that the characteristics of different performances of a work are seen as not belonging to the work:¹¹ as long as the relationship between the notes in the score are not altered, the same (autonomous) ‘musical work’ is said to have been performed. As Fink notes, this method severs music from cultural context.¹² Lyrics are also susceptible to a decontextualization, that is, printing the lyrics of a song for their (isolated) reading/analysis. As well as negating the vocal performance, it also negates

⁴ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 103.

⁵ Frith, Simon. Performing Rites. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996. 26

⁶ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 104.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. 105.

⁹ Middleton, Richard. "Popular Music Analysis and Musicology: Bridging the Gap." Popular Music 12.2 (1993): 177-90. 177.

¹⁰ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 111.

¹¹ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P., 1996. 18.

¹² Fink, Robert. "Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the Twilight of the Canon." American Music 16.2 (1998): 135-79.

the lyrics' location *in* the song: their relation to other sound events and the interplay between them. Though, Frith holds that this analysis of lyrics is valid for folk musics only, specifically (though not limited to) "country, blues, soul, and the right strands of rock; in the mainstream of mass music something else is going on."¹³ Here, I take "mass music" to mean pop music. Further, when transposed to the page and with the notation of the lyrics printed, the sung phrase, as we would hear it in the song is framed as a mere combination of words and notes, devoid of a time dimension. This is in aid of tracing musical histories and understanding the mechanics of music, rather than an attempt to discover musical *meaning*, which Middleton points out is the province of popular music analysis.¹⁴ One assumption that there is scope to make here is that people listen to different musics with different sets of expectations and with different 'ears'. If we could be reductive and say that the musicologist listens to the classical work as an enactment of a score, how could we reconcile this with pop music's autography and emphasis on character of sound? This is perhaps where phonography and musicology overlap.

In navigating away from the polemics aimed at much positivist musicology, Berger, expanding on Dahlhaus, illuminates an interesting point: musicology, being in embrace of all "scholarly and scientific study of music," should, instead of using musical fact to document and interpret historical activities, it should aim to study the former in light of the latter; that is, using nonmusical facts to interpret musical fact—assuming the two can be distinguished.¹⁵ Musicological analysis then, must take into consideration (among other things) the social

¹³ Frith, Simon. *Music for Pleasure : Essays in the Sociology of Pop*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989. 108

¹⁴ Middleton, Richard. "Popular Music Analysis and Musicology: Bridging the Gap." *Popular Music* 12.2 (1993): 177-90. 177.

¹⁵ Berger, Karol. "Musicology According to Don Giovanni, Or: Should We Get Drastic?" *The Journal of Musicology* 22.3 (2005): 490-501.

context in which a musical work is realised, as well as the character and identity of the musicians themselves.¹⁶ But the musical facts in question should not be confused with the musical score, which gives only a “virtual construct”¹⁷ of music that it *may* produce. There is a gulf between the imagined (the score) and the real (the heard music) that musicology—in the wake of Kerman’s call in the 1980’s for a “disciplinary revolution”¹⁸—must negotiate. Fink distinguishes between the methods of Canonical and Popular music analysis by suggesting that the former is largely “autonomous of society” and deals with “abstractions that transcend culture” and as such rewards an analysis of musical form; the latter is seen to be imbedded in culture and its value is thought to lie in the “cultural specificity of its message and effect.”¹⁹ (Though, turning to pop music, what does Wham! or Christina Aguilera, *say*?) Popular music scholars often invoke an image of (positivist) musicology as obfuscating the music’s identity, helping to bolster their view that the music is foremost a cultural signifier.²⁰ In this instance, musicology is directed toward the understanding of the *way* the music works—the mechanics of the score—not the way that it acts on a listener. But Kerman saw that a change in direction (toward hermeneutics) was necessary for musicology, particularly, since in the wake of the advances made in electronics in the 1950’s, music production, consumption and composition were drastically affected, adding that it was consumption that was affected the most.²¹

¹⁶ Ibid. 493.

¹⁷ Abbate, Carolyn. "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" Critical Inquiry 30.3 (2005): 505-36. 533.

¹⁸ Ibid. 506.

¹⁹ Fink, Robert. "Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the Twilight of the Canon." American Music 16.2 (1998): 135-79. 159. Fink admits that this a radically simplified distinction, nonetheless it is often a starting point for “discussions of analytical methodology and popular music”(158).

²⁰ Fink, Robert. "Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the Twilight of the Canon." American Music 16.2 (1998): 135-79. 158-9.

²¹ Kerman, Joseph. Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1985. 25.

Much criticism is leveled at musicology's apparent inability to effectively negotiate popular music. Key among the reasons is the problem of locating the musical work, which for the Western art music tradition, is the score. Gracyk illuminates this dichotomy: if we take Bach's *Goldberg Variations* as a single work, one that has been performed myriad times and in myriad places—each performance differentiated by these—and using different instruments, it is clear that “no specific *sound*” belongs to the work; a piano and a harpsichord (the examples Gracyk uses) have entirely different timbral qualities, yet when these instruments are used to invoke the *Goldberg Variations* a listener would have no trouble identifying it as the work played, in both instances.²² What is at question here is whether musicology—in the sense that almost always this is taken to be positivist musicology—can overcome the barriers entailed when a music's primary text *is* a recording. In regard to orchestral music, the recording is often a byproduct of a performance.²³ a document. Whereas for popular music the performance is often the byproduct of a recording,²⁴ which in turn may not necessarily exhibit any one performance, rather an admixture of sections of performances.²⁵ The “disciplinary revolution” that Kerman was asking for, seemed to consciously ignore popular music and instead direct itself, under the loose rubric of New Musicology, toward the performances of the music that it was always concerned with (roughly, Western art music pre 1900), and Kerman is only too quick to point this out.²⁶ New Musicology, in short, is the result of musicologists becoming aware of what Middleton would later dub the musicological problem.²⁷ This is not to say that hermeneutics

²² Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P., 1996. 18-19.

²³ Ibid. 19.

²⁴ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P., 2005. 85.

²⁵ Ibid. 89.

²⁶ Kerman, Joseph. Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1985. Introduction.

²⁷ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 103.

is the answer, just that it should be taken into consideration: “a rejection of hermeneutics will result in sterile formalism while its unbridled application can degenerate into unscientific guesswork.”²⁸ The difficulty, as Tagg sees it, is not so much to do with the “emitter” (performer) or the “receiver” (listener), but the “nature of the ‘channel’, the music itself”,²⁹ which he succinctly summarises in the form of the question: “why and how does who communicate what to whom and with what effect.”³⁰ The “how” (*how* does) and the “what” (communicate *what*) pose the most difficulty for any form of analysis, and that is because there has been relatively little of musicology’s content analysis as applied to popular music. Perhaps—drawing on other disciplinary discourses—it can reconfigure itself in a new (musicology) way/approach the subject from a different angle, so as to enlighten, and feedback into other disciplinary discourses.³¹

The lack of musicological insight into popular music could be attributed to the speed at which it transforms, and indeed, the “implications of consumerism, commercialism, trend and hype,” weigh heavily on analyses of popular music.³² That these are extrinsic to the music, indeed, all music—that “hype” cannot be discerned in a score, cannot be notated—remains one of the central views held for musicology; sociology on the other hand doesn’t see these as so much external but rather as having a discernible impact on listening experiences.³³

²⁸ Tagg, Philip. "Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice." Popular Music 2.Theory and Method (1982): 37-67. 43.

²⁹ Ibid. 40.

³⁰ Ibid. 39.

³¹ Ibid. 41.

³² Hawkins, Stan. "Perspectives in Popular Musicology: Music, Lennox, and Meaning in 1990s Pop." Popular Music 15.1 (1996): 17-36. 17.

³³ See Frith, Simon. The Sociology of Rock. London: Constable, 1978.

Popular music is a different beast altogether than that of the classical canon, and accordingly requires a different array of analytical tools.

+ -

THE SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF POPULAR MUSIC.

One of the aims of a sociological study of popular music is to describe the use value that various musics under the popular music canopy have, and for whom. It is the nexus of meaning and function that is of particular interest to the sociologist. “[P]opular music’s inescapably social character,”³⁴ from modes of production through to consumption, makes a sum of cultural capital necessary for understanding it, or at least to achieve an adequate listening.³⁵ Gracyk makes the crucial inference that a mis-reading of messages contained in music is “a risk one takes in making music for mass reproduction”³⁶ and that as music travels away from the site of production (both geographically and chronologically), listeners ‘read’ music within their own complex social and historical contexts.³⁷ Accordingly, it is a group or individual’s appropriation and recontextualisation of music that gives it its specific (though variable) meaning. However, as is the case with the practice of sampling, the music carries within it its own socio-historical meanings.³⁸ The label ‘folk’, as a means of describing how a music is used by its listeners is attached to a (commonly rock) music in order to distinguish

³⁴ Shepherd, John. "Music, Culture and Interdisciplinarity: Reflections on Relationships." Popular Music 13.2 (1994): 127-41. 128.

³⁵ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 167.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Often the sample functions as quote that is recontextualized but that nevertheless bears the weight of its original context.” Holm-Hudson, Kevin. "Quotation and Context: Sampling and John Oswald's Plunderphonics." Leonardo Music Journal 7 (1997). Abstract: 17-25. 17.

it from the apparent commercialism/inauthenticity of pop music; being a mass produced, commercial product, rock earns the ascription of the folk label, not by its modes of production, but in the way that it is seen to reflect something of its audience back to them, or express a way of life.³⁹ For Frith, this is not a sociological distinction, but a subcultural one. Within rock criticism, Scott finds a similar desire to distinguish rock from pop music in the form of a high/low split, where the former is serious, and the latter is brash and commercial, the same as can be found in the bypassing of popular music by traditional musicology.⁴⁰ The implication is that rock music is able to 'say something' to its audience and that pop is not, or if it is, it is to a much smaller degree; the person listening to rock music has something to discover and that something can contribute to the construction of their identity.⁴¹ Where, though, is this something located? According to Grossberg's reading of rock and roll, its significance is to be found in rock and roll's paralleling the conditions of late capitalism in post-war society. For in both rock and roll and late capitalism there exists

a denial of totality and a subsequent emphasis on discontinuity, fragmentation and rupture; a denial of depth and a subsequent emphasis on the materiality of surfaces; a denial of any teleology and a subsequent emphasis on change and chance so that history becomes both irrelevant and the very substance of our existence; a denial of freedom and innocent self-consciousness and a subsequent emphasis on context, determination and the intertextuality of discursive codes.⁴²

³⁹ Frith, Simon. "'The Magic That Can Set You Free': The Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community." Popular Music 1 (1981): 159-68.

⁴⁰ Scott, Derek B. "Music and Sociology for the 1990s: A Changing Critical Perspective." The Musical Quarterly 74.3 (1990): 385-410. 387.

⁴¹ Frith, Simon. "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music." Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Vol 4: Music and Identity. Ed. Simon Frith. London: Routledge, 2004. 36.

⁴² Grossberg, Lawrence. "Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock and Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life." Popular Music 4 (1984): 225-58. 231.

If rock and roll first appeared as a music for youth—the teenagers of the post war years—and as enforcing a generation gap, then rock (and roll)’s continuance as a dominant form instills the gap as a permanent one.⁴³ Contrary to Frith’s notion of rock music as being able to construct the identities of its listeners, Grossberg sees this music as enabling the avoidance of said construction of identities by virtue of the (perceived) constancy of the generation gap. The freedom of youth is contrasted with the responsibilities of adulthood and an engagement with a wider, self-sustaining society.⁴⁴ Though, at all times, rock music and its audience strive toward finding new values and meanings in its/their own historical moment, which is the struggle with the conditions of post modernity.⁴⁵ As new values and meanings, new identities are sought, they must then be installed into the context of a (post modern) society that “undermines all meaning and value.”⁴⁶

An amount of cultural capital would be required for a person listening to Elvis Costello’s song “Oliver’s Army” to know that it “refers to Oliver Cromwell and [that] the song as a whole explores the lingering effects of British military imperialism in the post-colonial period.”⁴⁷ But a listener would need zero cultural capital to simply *enjoy* the song, or dance to it. Gracyk goes on to say that by concentrating of the complex aspects of rock music we do it a disservice: “simplicity is no less an achievement than structural and semiotic complexity.”⁴⁸ The point here is that people do choose this music over and above the more

⁴³ Ibid. 230.

⁴⁴ Weinstein, Deena. "Rock: Youth and Its Music " Adolescents and Their Music. Ed. Jonathan S. Epstein. New York: Garland, 1994. 22.

⁴⁵ Grossberg, Lawrence. "Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock and Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life." Popular Music 4 (1984): 225-58. 235.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Gracyk, Theodore. "Valuing and Evaluating Popular Music." The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 57.2 (1999): 205-20. 212.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

(notationally) complex; that choice, however, is limited. The major record labels are primarily motivated by profit. To achieve this, the output from these labels is determined by previous successes; subsequent releases often mimic those that gross the most, and diversity is thus limited.⁴⁹ In terms of the recontextualisation of music mentioned above, it can only occur with regard to the available music, only for music that the industry chooses to make available.⁵⁰ Much of the sociology of popular music is geared to either explaining how various styles and genres are/were engendered, or how music and society interrelate; the former is most always retroactively linked to a history (be it a history of performance, of technology or of societal configurations), and the latter concerns signs and symbols evidenced in either the music, the performer(s) or the audience. For example, the heavy four-four rhythm in punk could be linked to the rhythm of military marching;⁵¹ an ideological link can be found between the Sex Pistols and the Lettrist International;⁵² the stammered vocals in The Who's "My Generation" can be linked to the Mod's excessive use of amphetamines,⁵³ and Middleton's theory of gesture postulates musical and physical gesture as analogous.⁵⁴ The list is endless. As with the examples drawn from punk music, the parallels need not be conscious; not simply mirror-facing-mirror feedback, but unidirectional as well. Radio can be seen as being both unidirectional and bidirectional: popular radio plays music that is popular—popular, however, is determined by the public.⁵⁵ What of "the artificial, the fake,

⁴⁹ Garofalo, Reebee. "How Autonomous Is Relative: Popular Music, the Social Formation and Cultural Struggle." Popular Music 6.1 (1987): 77-92. 80.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 82

⁵¹ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 16.

⁵² Marcus, Greil. Lipstick Traces : A Secret History of the Twentieth Century. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1989.

⁵³ Cohn, Nik. Awopbopaloobop Alopbamboom. Aylesbury: Paladin, 1972. 179.

⁵⁴ Middleton, Richard. "Popular Music Analysis and Musicology: Bridging the Gap." Popular Music 12.2 (1993): 177-90.

⁵⁵ Garofalo, Reebee. "How Autonomous Is Relative: Popular Music, the Social Formation and Cultural Struggle." Popular Music 6.1 (1987): 77-92. 82.

the plastic”?”⁵⁶ What histories does this music link to/interact with (and why do these ascriptions have pejorative connotations)? How does the artist/audience nexus function with music that is posited as an *other*—a something that a musical type in question is not—so as to bolster claims for the type in question? In these instances, we are afforded an insight as to what pop music may be, by inverting the is/is not binary. In interview with Duran Duran, Morley alludes to the oft proffered idea that pop performers are entirely interchangeable, rendering them form-without-content vessels for the transmission of something that they, specifically, need not transmit: “Said Simon, or was it Nick?”; “Duran Suave are committed to...”; “Said Nick, or was it Simon?”⁵⁷

“‘Authenticity’ is a matter of interpretation which is made and fought for from within a cultural and, thus, historicised position. It is ascribed, not inscribed.”⁵⁸ What of the *appearance* of authenticity? If, as Moore suggests, authenticity can be assured by “‘reflecting back’ to an earlier authentic practice”,⁵⁹ then one need only mimic certain practices that are already regarded as authentic. How is sincere expression/emotion recognised if not by being an expression/emotion that can be recalled by the audience?⁶⁰ Concomitant with this is the view that the performer, in order to bring this recognition about, must authentically express himself, which translates to honesty of expression. Parallel to this view is the one held by Grossberg: authentic works are ones that resist commodification, coopted works are the one’s

⁵⁶ Gracyk, Theodore. *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 219.

⁵⁷ Morley, Paul. "A Salmon Screams." *The Faber Book of Pop*. Ed. Hanif Kureishi and Jon Savage. London: Faber & Faber, 1995. 551-59.

⁵⁸ Moore, Allan. "Authenticity as Authentication." *Popular Music* 21.2 (2002): 209-23. 210.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 213.

⁶⁰ Moore gives as an example the “gravelly vocals connoting a voice made raw from crying or shouting” on Paul Weller’s “Changingman”, recalling a listeners personal experiences that would have made such a sounding voice possible. Moore, Allan. "Authenticity as Authentication." *Popular Music* 21.2 (2002): 209-23. 212.

that “allow and even celebrate their own commodification.”⁶¹ There is a point of intersection here with Frith’s essay, “Art vs. Technology” where he writes, “what really matters is not whether a show *is* spontaneous but, rather, whether it seems to be”.⁶² This, Moore would term “first person authenticity”,⁶³ as it relies on the “interpretation of the perceived expression of an individual on the part of the audience”,⁶⁴ which is problematic in that its trustworthiness can be questioned (is it, in fact, mere illusion).⁶⁵ Extrapolating further and looking to Eisenberg’s account of Motown’s ‘The Sound of Young America,’ a picture of tension between the (appearance of a) striving to emotional sincerity and the “well groomed” (read: standardised), “undifferentiated instrumental background”⁶⁶ begins to appear: out of the flatness of the standardised musical work, the mere *suggestion* of sincerity/emotion,⁶⁷ in the form of a “teased accent or the hint of a moan[,] could be thrilling”,⁶⁸ whether authentic or not.

⁶¹ Grossberg, Lawrence. "Putting the Pop Back into Postmodernism." Social Text 21 (1989): 167-90. 173. Grossberg goes on to say that the old high/low split is no longer relevant because the “distinction does not correspond to different points of origin (modes of production) or reception (audience).” Which is certainly true in the case of rock/pop. Ibid.

⁶² Frith, Simon. "Art Vs Technology." Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies Vol.2, the Rock Era. Ed. Simon. Frith. London: Routledge, 2004. 107-22. 112.

⁶³ Moore, Allan. "Authenticity as Authentication." Popular Music 21.2 (2002): 209-23. 211-14

⁶⁴ Ibid. 214.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Second person authenticity, or “*authenticity of experience...* occurs when a performance succeeds in conveying the impression to a listener that that listeners’ experience of life is being validated, that the music is ‘telling it like it is’ for them.” Third person authenticity occurs when a performer is able to accurately represent a performance tradition of an absent other. There is no mutual exclusivity between the three: Moore, Allan. "Authenticity as Authentication." Popular Music 21.2 (2002): 209-23.

⁶⁶ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P, 2005. 103.

⁶⁷ Something that contrasts with the *flat* musical accompaniment.

⁶⁸ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P, 2005. 103.

TECHNOLOGY AND POPULAR MUSIC.

In 1957, the engineer Bert Frilot took 57 seconds of music recorded onto magnetic tape and, with a razor blade and the studio technology of the time, produced a little over two minutes of music. This would later come to be recognised as Little Richard's "Keep A-Knockin'" (Specialty 611).⁶⁹ In the same way that a film is not solely the documentation and preservation of actors' performances—it is more accurate to say that it is the culmination of action and aesthetic choices—a record is not solely about the performance of musicians.⁷⁰ Indeed, what an audience comes to recognise as a finished record need not actually contain any performances of that song at all. Rather, it could be (and often is) the combination of several sections of several performances. In many cases the musical work produced did not exist prior to that record's completion.⁷¹ Thinking about the drum machine, it is common for a contemporary pop/non-pop song to feature for example only one (i.e., snare) drum *sound* on the finished recording, though that particular sound will be positioned along a timeline dozens of times (if not more), to act like an actual (in this example, snare) drum. It is not the case that the sound should be an accurate representation of that which is suggested, rather, that it *act* in a similar way. With MIDI,⁷² musical/sonic figures can be "deleted, copied, transposed, quantised, offset, inverted, retro-graded, delayed, inserted or otherwise adjusted

⁶⁹ Benicewicz, Larry. "Remembering Bert Frilot (1939-1999)". 17/04/2009. <<http://www.bluesworld.com/BFRILOT.HTML>>.

⁷⁰ Curtis, James M. "Toward a Sociotechnological Interpretation of Popular Music in the Electronic Age." Technology and Culture 25.1 (1984): 91-102. 99.

⁷¹ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 50-1. And Curtis, James M. "Toward a Sociotechnological Interpretation of Popular Music in the Electronic Age." Technology and Culture 25.1 (1984): 91-102. 99.

⁷² Musical Instrument Digital Interface

on-screen”⁷³ in order that a musical work may be produced. The production of music is now more a question of construction.⁷⁴ This pragmatism is evidenced by Frilot’s endeavour, above, and can also be evidenced in the practice of sampling. Here it should be apparent that certain musics are inconceivable without the aid of new technologies. Crooning, for example, was made possible by the microphone⁷⁵ and made possible a theretofore unheard intimacy: “vocalist could now be head singing softly”,⁷⁶ and thus be heard over and above louder instruments, allowing an ideal recording/insinuated performance, rather than a documentation of sound events that occurred.

This line of inquiry can be extended to include classical music as well, and it is here that recording technology is expected to function transparently and that it should be used for documentary purposes only; the same is true of much jazz music, whereby overdubs and edits are considered gimmicks.⁷⁷ The conductor Stokowski, in 1929, did not want to be broadcast under his own name after learning the function of the mix engineer; the reason being that if Stokowski was not the one who was actually in charge of the volume of the pianissimos, mezzo fortes and fortissimos that were going to be heard by the radio audience, then the mix engineer should be the one credited as the conductor. After attempting the task himself he later made the engineer a part of the orchestra, and cued him like any instrumentalist.⁷⁸ This example runs parallel to that of the early days of recording directly onto disc whereby louder

⁷³ Tagg, Philip. "From Refrain to Rave: The Decline of Figure and the Rise of Ground." Popular Music 13.2 (1994): 209-22. 214.

⁷⁴ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 65.

⁷⁵ Curtis, James M. "Toward a Sociotechnological Interpretation of Popular Music in the Electronic Age." Technology and Culture 25.1 (1984): 91-102. 92. See also Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 85.

⁷⁶ Frith, Simon. "Art Vs Technology." Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies Vol.2, the Rock Era. Ed. Simon. Frith. London: Routledge, 2004. 107-22. 107.

⁷⁷ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P., 1996. 40, 52.

⁷⁸ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P., 2005. 124.

instruments would have to be placed at appropriate intervals away from the recording horn so as not to overwhelm softer instruments, so as to achieve a balanced sound on playback.⁷⁹

When listening to a recording of a musical work, it is generally unclear whether one is listening to a single run through of a piece, or of several takes edited together to insinuate a single performance, unlike when one is witnessing a performance firsthand where it is unlikely that the group/orchestra will attempt several renditions of a work. The live concert situation is unique to that particular performance, whereas the commercial recording is fixed, and each playing of the record will be the same: more accurately, the same information stored in the grooves of the record or the data encoded onto a compact disc will be accessed.⁸⁰ For a recorded classical work, we are privy to a *profile* of a performance. This profile is essentially microphone placement and post performance treatment, as well as the performers' own particular take on the work. Thus listeners maintain a preference for one recording of an orchestral work rather than another. In this regard, it is the musical score that is the work. What we hear through the loudspeaker(s) in our home is what the microphone(s) received as sound energy, at the exact location of said microphone(s)⁸¹. Classical works are recorded myriad times by different orchestras at different points in time, and with different recording setups; a pop song on the other hand, tends to only be recorded once by a particular group, and we come to know the particular recording *as* the work, such that the musical work is constitutive of the sounds recorded⁸² (though different groups may—as was the case

⁷⁹ Horning, Susan S. "Engineering the Performance: Recording Engineers, Tacit Knowledge and the Art of Controlling Sound." *Social Studies of Science* 34.5 (2004): 703-31. 706.

⁸⁰ Gracyk, Theodore. *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*. Durham: Duke U.P., 1996. 55.

⁸¹ Ibid. 88.

⁸² Ibid. 17.

particularly in the 1950's—record cover versions of popular songs such that in 1954, the song “Sh-Boom” had four different recordings, by four different groups, in the top 25.⁸³).

Periods of time have sonic correlates. One need only hear the piano in a Jelly Roll Morton record, and the piano in an Elton John record to know this. Clearly the piano is not what is changing, and neither is the sound that it produces; the technology is changing the sounds that we hear at both the recording stage and the playback stage. Recorded sound is thus the product of technological developments.⁸⁴ If the essence of a record lies in its (technologically dependent) sound,⁸⁵ then according to this model the composition must necessarily be of secondary importance. In short, it is not the notation but the instantiation of the notation that gives a weight to a recording. Although, this is only true when records are the primary means through which an audience comes to know a musical work,⁸⁶ and this should be contrasted with musical forms where performance is the primary means. Technology plays such an important part in the construction of music that there are numerous cases where a group (such as Scritti Politti or Pet Shop Boys) cannot possibly ‘perform’ their songs in a live environment:⁸⁷ the recording *is* the work. The only evidence that we have to show that this music exists is the record (record as primary means). It is not generated from a musical score. The record produces the score in the sense that it is the record that enables a performance,⁸⁸ as was the case with “Keep A-Knockin’,” above, which although it was a

⁸³ Dawson, Jim and Steve Propes. 45 Rpm: The History, Heroes & Villains of a Pop Music Revolution. San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2003. 43.

⁸⁴ Curtis, James M. "Toward a Sociotechnological Interpretation of Popular Music in the Electronic Age." Technology and Culture 25.1 (1984): 91-102. 94.

⁸⁵ Frith, Simon. The Sociology of Rock. London: Constable, 1978. 85.

⁸⁶ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 55.

⁸⁷ Mitchell, Tony. "Performance and the Postmodern in Pop Music." Theatre Journal 41.3 (1989): 273-93. 279-80.

⁸⁸ Dellaria, Michael. "Some Recorded Thoughts on Recorded Objects." Perspectives of New Music 33.1-2 (1995): 192-207. 198.

cover of the Louis Jordan song of the same name (recorded 1931), it was those 57 seconds recorded in a 1957 out-take that provided the impetus for subsequent recordings and performances by Little Richard. This is an instance of “[i]nterpretive variation”,⁸⁹ which only occurs when a song is rerecorded by a different group, or differently by the same group.

+ -

THE POPULAR MUSIC INDUSTRY.

The music that this project is concerned with is that of the major label: music that is inseparable from—and from its inception is aimed at—the mass market, the largest possible audience.⁹⁰ Ideally, the life span of this music is short, a few weeks perhaps, and is released amidst a “fanfare of publicity, advertising, plugging on the radio, articles in the press.”⁹¹ The implication is that, laying dormant somewhere in the not too distant future the next song is already on its way to the radio station, one that will ostensibly replace the song that is currently being listened to.⁹² It is not just the hit records that this project is concerned with, but also the *output* of the major labels. The ratio of hit records to records released runs at approximately one in ten.⁹³ This is not to be confused with the output of the subsidiary/independent labels that the larger companies own. In the 1950’s when there was a

⁸⁹ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 55.

⁹⁰ Frith, Simon. The Sociology of Rock. London: Constable, 1978. 11.

⁹¹ Ibid. 12.

⁹² Parker, Martin. "Reading the Charts - Making Sense with the Hit Parade." Popular Music 10.2 (1991): 205-17. 212. For the period 1954-1955 when a song reached number one in the charts, it could expect to stay there for—on average—over 5 weeks. In the period 1972-1975, a song that reached number one could expect to maintain that position for less than two weeks: Peterson, Richard A. and David G. Berger. "Cycles in Symbol Production: The Case of Popular Music." American Sociological Review 40.2 (1975): 158-73. 163.

⁹³ Simon Frith in Garofalo, Reebee. "How Autonomous Is Relative: Popular Music, the Social Formation and Cultural Struggle." Popular Music 6.1 (1987): 77-92. 80. And Frith, Simon. The Sociology of Rock. London: Constable, 1978. 75, 118.

demand for a particular song (from an independent/small label), a major record company would release a 'cover' version of said song to try to limit the success of independent/small label that created the initial demand so as to maintain a larger share of the market.⁹⁴

Independent labels are often credited with the musical "innovations associated with progressive cultural movement",⁹⁵ the major labels by contrast, due to their "monopoly form, become sluggish, conservative and non responsive to the audience."⁹⁶ In order to combat the independent label dominance of the charts during the 1950's, the major record labels sought decentralised modes of production, resulting in the creation of semi-autonomous subsidiary labels to reflect musically the changing tastes of the time (rock and roll's emergence) and establish a varied roster of acts.⁹⁷ The implication is that small upstart labels are more in tune with emerging audiences, bands/performers, technologies, and establish a new market or encroach on that of the majors who in turn refashion this music (or even purchase the groups/label responsible for it) and posit it back into the market, thus maintaining their share of it.⁹⁸ For Lee, what distinguishes independent labels from the majors is that the former can be viewed "as cultural articulations as well as economic entities",⁹⁹ rather than merely the latter. For, although the independents may have entered the music business to provide a previously unavailable music, unbeknownst to them, they were performing vital "research

⁹⁴ Dowd, Timothy J. "Concentration and Diversity Revisited: Production Logics and the U.S. Mainstream Recording Market, 1940-1990." Social Forces 82.4 (2004): 1411-55. 1420.

⁹⁵ Garofalo, Reebee. "How Autonomous Is Relative: Popular Music, the Social Formation and Cultural Struggle." Popular Music 6.1 (1987): 77-92. 78.

⁹⁶ Born, Georgina. "Modern Music Culture: On Shock, Pop and Synthesis." Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies Vol 4: Music and Identity. Ed. Simon Frith. London: Routledge, 2004. 297-8.

⁹⁷ Dowd, Timothy J. "Concentration and Diversity Revisited: Production Logics and the U.S. Mainstream Recording Market, 1940-1990." Social Forces 82.4 (2004): 1411-55. 1421.

⁹⁸ Born, Georgina. "Modern Music Culture: On Shock, Pop and Synthesis." Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies Vol 4: Music and Identity. Ed. Simon Frith. London: Routledge, 2004. 297-8.

⁹⁹ Lee, Stephen. "Re-Examining the Concept of the 'Independent' Record Company: The Case of Wax Trax! Records." Popular Music 14.1 (1995): 13-31. 14.

and development for the majors”,¹⁰⁰ testing the market to see in what areas/genres demand lay.¹⁰¹ A music has to exist before it can be transmogrified into pop music: simulacra, never facsimile.

The 7-inch, 45 rpm record—the single—is the preserve of the pop song. This is where we first find the song. Motown Records was renowned for the time spent on mixing and mastering their singles, making multiple test pressings and playing them back through car stereo speakers and portable radios, so as to hear the song in the same way that the audience would hear the song.¹⁰² Compare this emphasis on the single/7-inch version of the song, with the same song as it appears on the album: the task of preparing the album for release was left to Motown’s night engineers who worked inexpensively, and by working overnight, the studio was free during the day to work on the singles.¹⁰³ Further, Motown albums were issued as “ancillary items to cash in on hit singles.”¹⁰⁴ Priority for pop music, then, is given to the single, contrasted with musical types that focus on the album: a selection of songs that function as a single work, not simply a collection of songs.¹⁰⁵ Parker hints at the parallels between the single, its length, and its time in the charts by suggesting that

¹⁰⁰ Garofalo, Reebee. "From Music Publishing to Mp3: Music and Industry in the Twentieth Century." American Music 17.3 (1999): 318-54. 338.

¹⁰¹ Garofalo, Reebee. "How Autonomous Is Relative: Popular Music, the Social Formation and Cultural Struggle." Popular Music 6.1 (1987): 77-92. 83.

¹⁰² Cunningham, Mark. Good Vibrations: A History of Record Production. Surrey: Castle Communications 1996. 63.

¹⁰³ Dawson, Jim and Steve Propes. 45 Rpm: The History, Heroes & Villains of a Pop Music Revolution. San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2003. 154

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, Lee B. "Phonography, Rock Records, and the Ontology of Recorded Music." The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 58.4 (2000): 361-72. 367.

[t]he charts are a process that moves from one state of certainty to another. The latest trends are presented as being the high point of popular music, but this stasis is entirely ephemeral since it is continually replaced by the next development.¹⁰⁶

The suggestion is that the single functions like a spike in a timeline, though at all other points along the line, there are other such spikes: telegraph-poles viewed from a moving train. It takes three minutes to listen to a single, forty minutes to listen to an album, and it follows that for pop music, and the major labels behind it, “[t]he only possible aggression against time remained with the continual and ceaseless replica”;¹⁰⁷ that which sells well has to be remade so as to achieve similar sales figures, though the reconfigured song will necessarily have different articulations, different pronouncements. This is nowhere more conspicuous than in the case of the cover song. The cover—provided the listener knows that it is a cover—engages the listener in a type of parallel listening experience, a collage, so that as the cover plays, the original is invoked in memory; two songs, to varying degree are heard.¹⁰⁸

+ -

CONCLUSION.

This literature review is designed to show that, indeed, a thing called ‘pop music’ does exist and that it can be distinguished from other popular musics. I have attempted to do so in

¹⁰⁶ Parker, Martin. "Reading the Charts - Making Sense with the Hit Parade." *Popular Music* 10.2 (1991): 205-17. 212.

¹⁰⁷ Dehò, Valerio. "Top of the Pops." Trans. David Smith. *Sound Zero: Art and Music from Pop to Street Art*. Ed. Valerio Dehò. Bologna: Graphiche Damiani, 2006. 12.

¹⁰⁸ Plasketes, George. "Re-Flections on the Cover Age: A Collage of Continuous Coverage in Popular Music." *Popular Music* 28.2 (2005): 137-61. 157.

most cases by a juxtaposition with rock music, for rock music receives more critical attention than any other popular music. Classical music is brought into the discussion as an outer limit, whereby its striving toward realism in recording is countered with pop music's seemingly antonymous attitude toward documentation. It should be apparent that both sociology and musicology bear findings that are relevant to each discipline; the music that each takes as its subject is viewed from a disciplinary-specific angle, and the results achieved are necessarily of that angle. The purpose of including these two seemingly mutually exclusive disciplines is to show precisely this. Compare Gracyk's remark that, "applied to rock, socially informed theorizing often forgets the music altogether",¹⁰⁹ with Frith's: "the discursive text [that musicology] constructs, is not the text to which anyone else listens."¹¹⁰

As I see it, my task is to apprehend the music before it reaches the listener, to interpret the 'what', in Tagg's equation.¹¹¹ Though instead of the 'what' in a traditional musicological sense being notation, it can well be transposed to return shape, sum, difference, articulation, weight; something that focuses on sound as well as design (autography). This corresponds with Tagg's call to allow hermeneutics to be at least acknowledged in musicology.¹¹² This is to be achieved in part by referring to musicology's proclivity for notational minutiae, without ever having recourse to actually refer to notation, so it is only the lens that we borrow, not the eye that looks through it. This project takes place in that gulf between heard sound and the playing back of recorded sound. That is, we consider what is being sounded *as a result* of the recording and treatment of sound, not what is merely recorded. In this way, we consider pop

¹⁰⁹ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 213.

¹¹⁰ Frith, Simon. Performing Rites. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996. 26

¹¹¹ "[W]hy and how does who communicate what to whom and with what effect." Tagg, Philip. "Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice." Popular Music 2.Theory and Method (1982): 37-67. 39

¹¹² Ibid. 43.

music as musical sound or, sound used musically, rather than a sequence of notes taking shape along horizontal and vertical axes.

If sociology has a tendency to cast pop music as an other, as something against which rock music (for example) can be discussed, does this then mean that what is pertinent to rock music is not pertinent to pop music? Pop music is the ground against which rock is the figure; when this occurs, it must be with paradigm examples of both that rock is understood. Sociology, in one sense, is directed to the understanding of music once it has reached an audience—after it has been co-opted—and in another, to the performers themselves. In reference to Tagg's equation, it would be the 'why', 'whom', and 'effect', to varying degrees, that are the fundamental questions. Sociological analysis acts as a boundary for my investigation, and although 'boundary' here is a question of degree, it can nonetheless be detected. What I am suggesting is that it is via a process of sociological exclusion that my analysis of pop music takes place, and in some instances, a process of inversion. As Shepard notes, rock is a music both made and experienced socially,¹¹³ and Middleton suggests that the sociologists assume a music is written by a particular social group, for a particular social group, which he rightly terms sociological essentialism.¹¹⁴ What of the plethora of cases in pop music where the performer not only does not write the material, but where a song will be passed from (potential) performer to performer until an appropriate/available one is found? Clearly the performer is not as integral to the finished recording as they are for rock music.

¹¹³ Shepherd, John. "Music, Culture and Interdisciplinarity: Reflections on Relationships." Popular Music 13.2 (1994): 127-41. 128.

¹¹⁴ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 4-5.

That recorded music is not possible without technological intervention should be obvious, and that some genres are not possible without certain pieces of equipment (one need only think of techno and its sub-genres) should also be clear. Middleton terms recorded music “reified abstraction”¹¹⁵ and it follows that so too are the sounds that we hear as a result of their being recorded onto a medium, or indeed, before they are recorded, for what sound does a synthesizer make? In the early days of pop music (broadly, post WWII) it was technology that engendered the schism between an instrument and its sound, such that the same instrument could ‘sound’ in a variety of ways: the same source could be represented in myriad ways and what this resulted in was the disappearing of the instruments, the transition from representation to suggestion, which can only occur with studio technology. Today, it is as though technology is the instrumentation, though to realise this, one need only have a broader definition of what an instrument actually is: see for example the work of Phil Spector and Joe Meek, where what is important is how a thing is instantiated, not what the thing to be instantiated is (this leads me to think that lyrics, for pop, approach—if not, are—superfluous. Schopenhauer would agree: “even the vox humana is for [music] originally and essentially nothing but a modified tone”.¹¹⁶ This schism corresponds to a similar one that exists between the score and the recording. Today it may even be said that the score is retrieved from the recording. Though one need only watch a Britney Spears concert DVD to see that it is not the musical score that is retrieved, but rather, it is the record is retrieved.

Crucially, the section on the music industry is included to highlight two key points: the relation between the major labels and smaller independent ones, and the primacy of the

¹¹⁵ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 85

¹¹⁶ Schopenhauer, Arthur. The World as Will and Representation. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. Vol. 2. New York: Dover, 1966. 448.

‘single’ for pop music and how the brevity of the single corresponds with the speed of the music industry. There is always another song, a new song that better embodies the present, that is about to be released. Accordingly, the length of time that songs stay in the charts (on average) gets shorter and shorter: “the future and the past appear increasingly irrelevant; history has collapsed into the present.”¹¹⁷

By using rock music as something against which pop music can be discussed, and using ideas culled from phonography as the starting point for the ensuing analysis, a certain pragmatism should become evident in pop music: from the cover songs of the 1950’s and 1960’s used to cash in on already popular songs, through to the technology that so permeates the construction of pop songs today. Function, construction, and allusion are recurring motifs throughout phonographic analyses, and are also evidenced in the sound-constructs that we recognise as pop songs. It is the form of what is presented that is important for pop music, and to a lesser degree the content. Crucially, the space that has been carved out for this project to be pursued is sympathetic both Stockhausen’s language, and approach to considering sound. For it appears that Stockhausen’s compositions have their root in ideas about sound, and the organisation of sound, which latter point is really what autographic works are, even if his are not autographic. This is the art of sound, and this is how pop music is thought of throughout this project—as sculpted and organised sound, with the removal/disavowal of any score, and of any personnel.

¹¹⁷ Grossberg, Lawrence. "Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock and Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life." Popular Music 4 (1984): 225-58.

METHODOLOGY.

The approach that this project takes is essentially a sonico-structural one; the limits of which can be broadly distinguished by their being concerned with events that take place on either a microscopic, or a macroscopic level. As such, this section is divided into those two concerns. This is because what we can come to understand about a song depends on our proximity to it, or the lens through which we view the subject. Delineating in this way is appropriate because not only do we have to consider specific songs and their make-up, but also the whole of the field, and the interrelation between pop songs of different decades. Roughly, we want to observe both some DNA, and the body that is arrived at from that DNA. For instance, being at a (albeit figurative) distance from a work will yield information that is reflective of that distance, and will generally reveal an understanding of temporal relationships that a close proximity to the work will not reveal. Contrariwise, a close proximity to a work relates more closely to texture and micro-relationships: information that pertains to the simultaneous, compared with information that pertains to the sequential. What we have to understand is that these positions/lenses are not mutually exclusive, and that it is merely the analyst that changes position. The task here is to show what each can provide us with. Subsequent to this section, there is an attempt to unite both views so that they themselves are working in parallel. With this in mind we can then—in theory—consider a work from those intermediate positions as well since we are concerned with sound's precise deployment over some time-line, and within the constraints of a medium. It is the awareness that the angle that we view the subject from determines what we can say about that subject.

Here, in the first instance, we are concerned only with what is perceptible; there is no recourse to employing a sonograph, for instance. Human physiology makes this unnecessary, and a sonogram deals not with sound—deals not with *air*—but with an electrical signal. One would not play back through a loudspeaker system a particular song, and then feed that recording into a sonograph in order to analyse that song. This would not be appropriate either since it “is not a representation of the music as perceived by the human ear”.¹¹⁸ Further—and as Smalley notes—the analyst must calibrate the sonograph, determining the resolution of its response to the input signal¹¹⁹ so that there can be any number of possible sonograms for a given work.

The spectre of electroacoustic music studies looms at the periphery of this project. Electroacoustic music can be summarised as that which requires electricity for either the reception or production of sound—the transfer from the acoustic to the electric or vice versa—beyond simply that of a microphone or loudspeaker/amplification device,¹²⁰ and the study of electroacoustic music is aware of this transfer and its implications in a heightened fashion. Pop music therefore is electroacoustic music in the first instance by way of its production, and even then only to a degree—an increasing one, to be sure. Much of the study of electroacoustic music is not relevant to pop music *fundamentally*. Autography does well in place of it in this regard. Though from it, a host of approaches to listening have been established, and this project conflates a number of them without the rigidity that they, taken individually, seem to suggest. The method here is malleable. Reduced listening (where sound is divorced from its cause and meaning), causal listening (which relates to acousmatic

¹¹⁸ Smalley, Denis. "Spectromorphology: Explaining Sound-Shapes." Organized Sound 2.2 (1997): 107-26. 108.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Landy, Leigh. "Reviewing the Musicology of Electroacoustic Music: A Plea for Greater Triangulation." Organized Sound 4.1 (1999): 61-70.

thinking, where sound and source are split, and considers what this entails), semantic listening,¹²¹ technological listening, and intrinsic and extrinsic observations; all are deployed where their specific ‘lenses’ are pertinent.

+–

MICRO ASPECT.

If we allow that pop music is first and foremost a recorded music, and that the performance of a pop song is often, as Eisenberg notes, “a promotional appearance in which one attempts to mimic one’s records”,¹²² then that which is encoded in the record/medium and that which is heard when the record is played back should come under equal scrutiny. The distinction is paramount. For, when the record is the primary means through which one comes to know a song, every aspect of it is “available for our discrimination and thus for its interpretive potential.”¹²³ Clearly, though, whatever information is attained from the analysis of a particular song, by whatever means, is only applicable to that particular song, and will yield results that are indicative of that particular approach to the subject. This being the case, I propose that something of a parallax view should be adopted so as to de-specify that which belongs to a single pop song in order to render it malleable—schematic—so that a link can be forged, for instance, between pop music of different eras. This de-specifying is essentially the process of observing the abstract and not the particular, though it is through the particular that we arrive at the abstract. Further, this act implicitly addresses those

¹²¹ Rebelo, Pedro. Audio-Vision. http://www.sarc.qub.ac.uk/~prebelo/teaching/amt05/AMT_lecture4.htm 22/10/10 2.04p.m. Derived from Michel Chion and Pierre Schaeffer, whose writings largely remain untranslated.

¹²² Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P, 2005. 85.

¹²³ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 55.

differences in heard sound that relate to the listening scenario. This de-specification is similar to our previous delineation between micro and macro vantage points (whereby distance yields a broader, more general understanding of a work), and the parallel occupation of both positions. Further, by de-specifying what we hear we are better able to conjecture as to the source information of that sound—where ‘source’ pertains to the medium, and not anything prior to that, i.e., a recording session or an instrument and its configuration—and in doing so, we take into account the fallibility of our listening. In this way, what pertains to a song’s social/cultural character is given over in favour of what is not: melody, as compared with *this* melody, chorus as compared with *this* chorus etc. Furthermore, it is not *this melody*, as it is *this instantiation* of *this* melody: the awareness of a process, rather than *this* result of a specific process. Criticism of musicology has shown that it is not the notes that become a riff or phrase that individuate a particular song, but their instantiation: it is *how* something is represented, not *what* is represented. These absolutely specific depictions of the abstract of the content, yield the autographic. However, this implies that the work is derived from a score, but as Gracyk shows, autographic works can arise from sound, rather than from a score.¹²⁴ Which is to say, some recorded sound may be the inspiration for the finished work, where we could say that the recording studio is the instrument/impetus for a composition, instead of, say, toiling away at a piano to write a song that is later played by guitars. In this case it is the analyst that conjures the abstract information so as to better understand the specific information.

So the sociocultural aspect of pop music is contained in these specifics—though the musicologist and the sociologist both would be able to highlight trends of various types; the musicologist could comment on content, and the sociologist could comment on presentation

¹²⁴ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 47

and how it is arrived at. At this point I suggest that the fundamental nature of pop music is beyond the scope of mere trends, where trends essentially amount to different ways of conveying various aspects of the essence of pop music. For example, there are hundreds of different makes of car, all of them however are cars: ‘car’ is constant. Here it should be apparent that the content—in the musicological sense—holds less weight historically than does the presentation of that content. This is for two reasons. Firstly, we do not listen with musicological ears—cover-bands make this more than clear. The cover-band may perform a popular song at the same tempo, with the same structure, notation, and instrumentation, but the timbres will never (and can never) match, the vocal affectations will be different by virtue of their being intoned by different people with different voice boxes, throats, and lungs. Thus we hear the cover version *as* a version. Secondly, a melody, unless sounded is only ever marks on a page. Hierarchically, sound takes precedence over content: a note is couched in the representation of the note; a note needs *to sound* (what, then, is this sound?). Here it is evident that the recorded sound is a representation, a profile—as Gracyk would say¹²⁵—that from all the possible renderings of a particular instrument, we hear only one. The sound that we are privy to must have, of necessity, been deliberated over. Could we go a step further, in light of Gracyk,¹²⁶ and say that the sound that we hear when we play back a song is a profile of the sound-information committed to the medium? Do we then say that there is only sound-information held in the medium, since for there to be sound there must be at least a time dimension? Put simply, a record on a shelf does not sound. One of the concerns of this project is in coming to grips with this transition from sound information to sound energy, and using that sound to understand the information that is prior to it, that causes it.

¹²⁵ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 88

¹²⁶ Ibid.

In the instances where an instrument is recorded via the capturing of a vibrating column of air, one must decide how best to capture that air so as to achieve the intended result (or how best to work with the result). It becomes a question of what to emphasise and what not to emphasise; what microphone/s to use and where to put it/them; where to place the instrument/amplifier. For example: a hand-clap is heard over an electric guitar; there appear to be several Michael Jackson's simultaneously singing in parts of "Billie Jean". But it is neither a hand-clap, nor is it Michael Jackson. It is the sound of each, a sound produced by that named thing: a token. More accurately, it is the segment of the total frequency-spectrum produced by each that is deemed appropriate for the song that it will eventually be a part of. For example, the hand-claps that feature in song Q are different from the hand claps that feature in song R. The *particular* of the pop song is what gives it a social/cultural weight, the information that is made particular, less so. This should not be confused with a purely musicological reading of pop music; it is the understanding of the make up of the particular, and the understanding of the de-specified particular that should allow us to approach the essence of pop music without ever having to come into conflict with its social character.

There is a misnomer: 'artificial' sound. Once stored in the grooves of the vinyl or as data on a CD, no sound retrieved, either by the needle following a path traced by the lathe, or by a laser beam reading 1's and 0's, is artificial. Whatever was the initial source of the sound that is heard as a result of playing a record is irrelevant in regard to the heard sound and that sound's relationship to others in the recording. "[R]ecorded sound does not allow us to relive an actual sonic or musical event other than itself."¹²⁷ This is particularly true when we consider contemporary electronic music whereby, for instance, a programmer is required

¹²⁷ Poss, Robert M. "Distortion Is Truth." Leonardo Music Journal 8 (1998): 45-48. 46.

instead of a drummer. No drums need be played for there to be drums on a record. A more striking example may be found in the choir, for there need not be a choir for a record to have a choir-like sound—providing the correct hardware and software are available. But I suspect that this goes beyond budget constraints and logistics, and speaks more to a pragmatism than anything else, for it is not that the record being produced needs a choir *per se*, rather, it needs choir-like, drum-like, a sound that operates similarly to some other sound. A simulacrum. Additionally, a guitarist or producer may make use of overdubbing to suggest a single performance. In this way, we cannot reach back past the medium—nor should there be the desire to do so—for it is *to the medium that the pop song aspires*. Not composition and arrangement but recording and mixing, where the elements of the song are the raw materials for the producer/engineer to ‘colour’ and assemble.¹²⁸ Although, Gracyk makes the assumption that each time a record is played we know that “each playing will be the same. [And that] we do make allowances for minor variations due to material factors (e.g., changing the settings on our equipment or buying new speakers).”¹²⁹ I, however, have been mistaken on numerous occasions when watching video-clips of new releases on a television capable only of a monaural output as regards the sound activity/presentation of numerous songs. This is similar to those situations where one listens to a classical music radio station at a low volume, where one could be forgiven for thinking that there are periods of silence in a given piece, where actually—were the radio slightly louder—these apparent pauses are simply quiet passages that fall below the threshold of perception. With regard to the video-clip, there is just cause to say that I was distracted by the visual element and was unable to focus solely on the sound, for as Ramachandran has shown, we can only ever direct our attentional

¹²⁸ Hennion, Antoine. "The Production of Success: An Anti-Musicology of the Pop Song." *Popular Music* 3 (1983): 159-93. 163.

¹²⁹ Gracyk, Theodore. *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 55.

resources to one thing at any one time.¹³⁰ So, after hearing the same song on numerous occasions in this way, I purchase the single. Upon playing the song on my stereo I notice the guitars have more low-frequency information than I had initially thought, and the percussion seems de-emphasised. The crux of this point is that the CD does not change: the same information is being accessed, but as it plays through different and more accurate speaker configurations, I may find that I still prefer the sound-relationships that I heard through the tinny speaker on my television. Other times, I am overwhelmed by how much more I like a song when played through a more sophisticated stereo system. The allowances that I make in these situations necessitates that these are renderings of the same material; that it is indeed the same song that I am listening to. If two (what I notice to be) drastically different soundings of the same song are possible, then there must surely be a greater number as well: the song plays in the next room; from a parked car near my house; on an improperly tuned radio; in a shopping mall; in a crowded club. In each situation I must perform an act of Gestalt to nullify environmental and technical factors that impede my identification of the song. How else would it be possible to recognise the same song in each of these situations, given that they sound different in each?

Musical type is a question of degree and as such any one song can be in possession of aspects of multiple types to greater or lesser degree. For example, a particular rhythm can allude to one type of music; the timbre of a guitar can allude to another, vocalisation to yet another. I propose that the kernel that contains all of the data for pop music—its core, its DNA—can never be wholly accessed by one song. The whole field that is pop music

¹³⁰ Ramachandran, Vilayanur S. "The Artful Brain: Reith Lectures". 2003. 04/07/2009. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003/lecture3.shtml>>.

evidences this in its permutations of the DNA, and is why, logically, a single pop song cannot manifest all aspects of what it is to be a pop song: “we nowhere find ‘the thing’, but only particular things, these and those things”,¹³¹ as with the car example, above. In one regard, the act of locating pop music is by a process of exclusion: of both an audience and of non-pop musics. To negate an audience is to say that no two people listen in the same way, and that there truly is no fixed locus in any song. I would suggest, however, that the closest there is to a fixed point of interest in a song is in the continual unfolding of that song through time. That is, that temporal (i.e., continually changing) point prior to the as yet sounded sound: the transition from medium to sound. This may be better illustrated by considering a reel of movie-film as still images in sequence. A listener is free to allow their attention to drift between melody, accompaniment, percussion, timbre and studio manipulation. As such, this study is directed toward that which is presented to a listener: what it is that they are free to roam within. Where the sociologist of music may say that what I take as the object of study is not that which a listener listens to, I might ask, What, then, of the next listener, or the next?¹³² We may continue by saying that the listener that sociology constructs is an imagined one. The listener, for the sociologist, is located in a specific socio-cultural group, and this socio-cultural group and the listener, are but one among many. ‘The listener’ is an abstraction to begin with (case studies notwithstanding), so I propose to remove him/her altogether and thus the socio-cultural background they are imbedded in.

That there will be commonalities and overlappings between pop music and non-pop musics is an inevitability. Though, what is it that is overlapping, and to what degree is the

¹³¹ Heidegger, Martin. What Is a Thing? Trans. W.B. Barton. Jr and Vera Deutsch. Indiana: Regnery/Gateway, Inc., 1967. 11.

¹³² Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 173.

overlap pertinent? As the relationship of major labels to independent/small labels in the record industry section of the literature review shows, there has to exist prior to there being pop music, a music that can be used as source-data for the sculpting into pop. So in one sense, pop music manifests in the wake of other musics, which is in accord with Jameson's view of repetition, below. These musics that are prior to pop are the ones to be excluded in the act of locating pop; it is as though pop music is forever a version of something already in existence. The process of invention, the trial and error, has already taken place in that which it is a version of. Again, the cover song provides strong evidence of this. The question then, is, Can pop music recoup anything other than merely sound/device? For the context in which the original existed is not, and can not be the context in which the pop song exists. It comes from a different place; this lag necessitates that it can not be original in this regard.

Brown states that "works of phonography cannot be performed."¹³³ The only way to hear a work of phonography is to play a record (or whatever medium the song happens to be stored in/on). This is music to be played "on machines",¹³⁴ not on instruments—and although distinguishing between the two is becoming increasingly difficult, it is along traditional lines that the distinction is made, so that the turntable is used for listening (machine), rather than producing music (instrument). The status of a work of phonography is not exclusive to pop music, though in its affording an "ideal event"¹³⁵ we can say that each time we play back such a work, the resultant 'sounding' is an index of that work, and that the source material that communicates this information is free of any superfluity, and could be nothing other than

¹³³ Brown, Lee B. "Phonography, Rock Records, and the Ontology of Recorded Music." The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 58.4 (2000): 361-72. 363.

¹³⁴ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 19.

¹³⁵ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P, 2005. 89.

what it actually is. If it can be nothing other than this, then each record stands alone as the ultimate pronouncement of itself: the ideal to which it aspires is itself. This we can contrast with classical music, where the score could be said to occupy this role. The actual ‘work’ for pop music is the information committed to disc since this can be legislated; the play-back of the work, however, can not be legislated. Thus, if ‘itself’ is housed in the record then a sociological understanding negates the ‘itself’. Sociology, then, looks to the thing once encountered, and in accordance with Heidegger’s reading of Kant, deals not with the thing’s own essence but with the perception of it.¹³⁶ A perception that is but one among many in accordance with sociology’s listener. And while this project forbids this perception in order to get to the ontology—which is in accord with the negation of a listener in the sociological sense—it does broach the topic later.

Although this could be seen as a move toward an essentialism, a connection can be drawn between pop music’s single—its fundament—and the ‘ideal’ just mentioned. The single *is* essential, and if pop music strives toward the single, then it also strives toward the essential. This we could figure as being outside of time: stored on the record, not yet heard. And since there could be said to be nothing superfluous in the autographic record, it is necessarily essential.

The mechanics of songs, whether autographic or not, can only be understood in hindsight. They are not immediately apparent, even though given to the listener at each and any playing. Understanding them relies on repeat listenings and what is essentially the dissolving of a song into its constituents. This process renders a song atemporal. Our first

¹³⁶ Heidegger, Martin. What Is a Thing? Trans. W.B. Barton, Jr and Vera Deutsch. Indiana: Regnery/Gateway, Inc., 1967. 141.

listening is akin to observing the major plot points of a film. It becomes a synopsis of sorts. With these peaks or extremities in mind, our subsequent listenings travel inward toward the song as about concentric circles, toward information at a higher resolution, cross-checking for accuracy/continuity with previous listenings. We are listening to the song's make-up; to how sound articulates some structure, as distinct from listening to the song's passage through time. In truth, this delineation between sound and structure is an imagined one, but a helpful one nonetheless. In allowing us to convert or downgrade what is a highly complex system into a series of abstract vectors (the work or part's 'structure'—and subsequent separation of sound from its temporality), means that we can reference a more detailed reading of some sound activity with the abstract—or long lens view—of the song as a whole to help build a picture of where and how these aspects sit relative to one another. It is an attempt at keeping in mind the simple and the complex, and switching between the two where there are lapses in knowledge so as to better understand the whole.

Consider classical music, whereby it develops—in a way that is different to pop music—over time; sections of a work cannot be understood apart from the whole because it is in reference to the whole that the section in question is imbued with a weight, an emotional weight.¹³⁷ The work as a whole is dependent on there being passages that in sequence reveal something greater than the weight of the passages themselves, which Eisenberg contrasts with popular music which “tends to be emotionally stable, so that a given piece is all of a piece”.¹³⁸ Where Jameson writes of repetition in mass culture, he makes a strong argument for there being no ‘original’ in the repetitiousness of pop music, whereby it is only in the second instantiation of a motif that repetition begins. The first-time, however, is retroactively

¹³⁷ Eisenberg, Evan. *The Recording Angel*. New Haven: Yale U.P, 2005.154.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 153-4.

converted into repetition by it being repeated, which corresponds with the listening just described. There is now no first-time from which there can be repetitions, paralleling Krauss with regard to the grid in painting.¹³⁹ This, Jameson extends to whole songs, whose first listening, he tells us, is not in fact a first listening at all since we are constantly exposed to these songs.¹⁴⁰ What I will suggest is that whether or not it is the same song that we hear coming from, say, a passing car, or a shop-front, what we are presented with is different aspects of the same ‘code’, that pop music is present in each song. Repetition functions on both musematic¹⁴¹ and discursive scales, though here ‘discursive’ is extended beyond the level of the ‘phrase’ and to its widest scope: the field. It is this discursive repetition that Jameson refers to when he says we “live in constant exposure”¹⁴² to the pop song, and thus to all pop music. For there may be no ‘original’ in terms of either the song—“the sounds assembled on tape do not exemplify any one musical work (rather than another) when recorded”¹⁴³—or, by Jameson’s reckoning, an “‘original’ musical text, as it really was, or as it might have been heard ‘for the first time’”¹⁴⁴ which, from Frith’s perspective is in accord with pop music’s not coming from any particular place.¹⁴⁵ Here, I take Frith’s “place”¹⁴⁶ to be a sociocultural one.

¹³⁹ Krauss, Rosalind E. The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987. 13.

¹⁴⁰ Jameson, Fredric. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." Social Text 1 (1979): 130-48. 137-8.

¹⁴¹ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 189.

¹⁴² Jameson, Fredric. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." Social Text 1 (1979): 130-48. 137.

¹⁴³ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P., 1996. 47

¹⁴⁴ Jameson, Fredric. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." Social Text 1 (1979): 130-48. 138.

¹⁴⁵ Frith, Simon, Will Straw and John Street, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Pop & Rock. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001. 95.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

There is something paradoxical about the term—and the art of—‘mixing’, which can be broadly defined as the process of giving sound articulation, presence (or a considered lack thereof) and engendering appropriate inter-sound relationships.¹⁴⁷ Mixing is a wholly aesthetic endeavor whose upper limit is imposed by the medium that the work is destined for (for my purposes the limitations inherent in the medium—be it the vinyl record, compact disc etc., are taken as a given).¹⁴⁸ Yet, the act of mixing operates at both the levels of the invisible, and the visible—if such a transposition be allowed—for a sound, either recorded or not, *has* articulation, *has* presence, for it is heard and has a time dimension. It is heard because a sound-producing action was executed/articulated, and thus sound, as a result, is *present*. The mix engineer’s task is to articulate the articulated, to present the presented, to give character to that which of necessity has character. An action is performed on the sounds given to the mix engineer so that they may—individually (when viewed as such they become abstracted from the whole, unless sounded in solo during the song) and in chorus—exemplify something that prior to their being effected/processed they could not. As with Michael Jackson’s vocal/s in Billie Jean mentioned above, as a listener we are only privy to the result of the manipulation of the source material, such that the record is the source and not something prior to the record. Extended further, the act of mixing, in making itself known through studio technologies such as reverb and compression, pronounces the source less important than the sound derived from the source.¹⁴⁹ Consider: ‘the guitar’, and ‘the guitar sound’. A listener does not hear ‘the guitar’, he/she hears a specific ‘guitar sound’. In this regard mixing

¹⁴⁷ For a detailed account of the changing tasks required of the mix engineer, see: Horning, Susan S. "Engineering the Performance: Recording Engineers, Tacit Knowledge and the Art of Controlling Sound." *Social Studies of Science* 34.5 (2004): 703-31.

¹⁴⁸ For an understanding of the limitations imposed by the medium, especially that of the compact disc and how it differs to the vinyl record, see: Rothenbuhler, Eric W. and John Durham Peters. "Defining Phonography: An Experiment in Theory." *The Musical Quarterly* 81.2 (1997): 242-62.

¹⁴⁹ Corbett, John. "Free, Single, and Disengaged: Listening Pleasure and the Popular Music Object." *October* 54 (1990): 79-101. 92-3

is visible. We are aware of this through the acknowledgment of this fact, which is not to say that we need to be familiar with guitar sounds—which are of course limitless—but that we need only be aware that what we hear is a result of some process: no recorded sound is ‘untreated’. On the other hand, it is simultaneously invisible: as listeners we can only hear that which the medium allows us to access. Conjecture as to the source is and can only be rhetoric. We do not hear the source *per se*; we only hear *sound*. Joe Meek understood this, as is evidenced by his production of “Have I The Right?” by The Honeycombs,¹⁵⁰ in which the kick-drum sound in the chorus (more accurately, the sound that performs the same role as a kick-drum) was in fact “several musicians stomping loudly on the studio stairs,”¹⁵¹ which itself, as it exists on the record, *is* the source, the source of the heard sound. It is there to be heard in full, as no other sound, thus the invisibility of mixing.

So how does pop music manifest this aspect in a way different to other musics? What does mixing afford that has been utilised by pop music producers/engineers since its inception? Perhaps it is the manifestation of a striving; to place a sound in a realm that was previously neither possible nor present in the sound previously, whereby a departure from the source is necessary to transmit something that the source, untouched, could not transmit. Further, the lines between mixing and composing are becoming increasingly blurred. Since character of sound is of such importance for pop music, we may find that even though it is possible to derive a score from a work, mixing and production enforces a split from score and sound so drastic that—to exaggerate—we may find that the score does not refer to the work that it was derived from.

¹⁵⁰ Honeycombs, The. “Have I The Right?” Pye Records, 1964. (CD1. Track 1.)

¹⁵¹ Cleveland, Barry. Joe Meek's Bold Techniques. Vallejo: MixBooks, 2001. 191.

For pop music, presentation is more of a concern than documentation. We could even say, in light of the pop music of today, there is little to no documentation in the sense that we are more often than not dealing with construction instead of performance; what we have is the documentation of construction. And although there are myriad musics that are autographic musics—hip-hop, techno, most, if not all electronic music past a certain point in time—pop music is designed to ‘work’, it is designed to communicate some central thesis across a variety of play-back scenarios, unlike, for example, certain techno tracks which can be made for specific sound-systems and clubs.

With this in mind we can expand from the above and postulate that it is not merely for aesthetic reasons that sounds are manipulated during the mixing process, but also for functional reasons as well. Indeed, aesthetics and functionality cannot be divorced, which is reinforced further by a work’s being autographic, and is perhaps most easily evidenced by considering allographic works, where a sound’s character could not be said to belong to the work. Conversely we could consider the practice of sampling in hip-hop, where it should be quite clear that, for example, where some musical (notateable) passage is sampled, it is not done purely for the notation. That is to say, playing those notes, rather than sampling that specific recording of those notes would produce a different work. This aesthetic/function link is akin to having a car whose design impacts directly on the way that its engine works.

It is a sound’s precise presentation that guarantees it a place in the “reified abstraction”¹⁵² of autographic works. This runs contrary to musicology’s notion that the musical score is the work. In this case, one has to listen beyond the constituent sounds/instruments to access the score. In truth, the notion that we listen to say, guitars and

¹⁵² Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 85.

drums and vocals is something of a fallacy: a speaker is only ever capable of emitting a single sound-wave. It is the sophistication of our ears and brain that allows us to perceive multiple sonic events occurring simultaneously. A simple proof: a needle traces but one path in the groove of a vinyl record. There is a parallel to be drawn here: when I listen to a vinyl record or shellac disc, I have to listen *through* the crackles and pops that the medium produces, to the music that the speakers play back. When I listen to a CD, I have also to listen through the ambient noise in my house: refrigerator hum, traffic noise, chairs creaking, and when the volume is down low I have to listen more intently.¹⁵³ Further, Gracyk makes a remark regarding the “clear enunciation”¹⁵⁴ essential for pop vocal delivery, and contrasts this with the rock vocalist’s penchant for degrees of incoherence¹⁵⁵—which we can view in light of ‘listening through’. In this regard we can see that pop music producers take steps to minimise the level of Gestalt needed to (potentially) grasp that which is presented to a listener. We could extend this notion further and say that if a certain clarity of enunciation can be consistently evidenced in the vocals, why not ascribe the same clarity to sound relationships, and composition generally?

+ -

MACRO ASPECT.

Repetition in song is a curious phenomenon. On the one hand, we have little or no difficulty in recognising something that repeats. A riff for example. What does not repeat in

¹⁵³ Poss, Robert M. "Distortion Is Truth." *Leonardo Music Journal* 8 (1998): 45-48. 46.

¹⁵⁴ Gracyk, Theodore. *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 104.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

the case of the riff is its location in the song, in time. Extrapolating from this notion, neither does the listener's experience of that riff repeat. The riff that repeats is heard with regard to what has come before it and what is happening simultaneously. For example: the hi-hats stop, a rhythm guitar changes key, a synthesizer starts in, the vocals continue; amidst this activity the riff continues to repeat. Is this repetition, though? What is repeating here? This instance of repetition, when identified in this way, occurs on the level of the discursive (and we may even say that this is an abstraction thereof; the audio signal is here split by the listener into constituent aspects). For example: I walk to work each day. The "walk to work" is repeated; "the walk" is not repeated. If I alternate my route to work each day, the "walk to work" aspect is repeated, but "the walk" is not. If I take the same route each day, "the walk" is simultaneously repeated, and is not repeated. On a macro level they are the same, yet on a micro they are not and cannot be the same. The transposition of this model to recorded music is possible. When a drummer plays the same one-bar pattern (*pattern* itself is somewhat problematic), the pattern may well be repeated on the macro level—the level of the score—but under closer scrutiny we see (hypothetically) that every second snare drum hit is slightly louder than the first; there are timing inconsistencies in the hi-hats and so on. The pattern repeats and the pattern does not repeat. Or, the pattern repeats, but *the playing/sounding of the pattern* does not repeat. Further, at each playing of the pattern over time an emotional weight is accrued. It is heard in reference to all prior soundings of the pattern. This emotional weight adds and also fades over time in sympathy with our attention.

The best way to illustrate this is as follows. Imagine a unit of repetition—the thing to be repeated—as a solid square placed at the 0,0,0 point of an XYZ axis. It is solid because we are presently hearing it. To show its repeating and its part in the song's history, we place another such square at 0,0,1 on the axis, and on top of this we place another such square,

0,1,1. Here, our 0,0,0 square is now represented by the 0,0,1 square, and the current repeating unit is the one placed at 0,1,1. As we listen to the 0,1,1 unit, it is ‘full colour’—solid. The unit beneath it (0,0,1) is faded, and the 0,0,0 unit is further faded. As the repetition of this unit continues, previous units become progressively lighter along both Y and Z axes. Each instance of the repeating thing has a history different—though related—to that of other instances, previous or forthcoming, and this is represented along the Y axis.¹⁵⁶

With this crude model that negates structure, accompaniment and mixing/production, repetition can be seen as an cumulative process, which is of course inherent in the act of repeating. The inverse of this model may also be true. In this way, the first instantiation of the unit of repetition contains all subsequent repeatings. As the section in question plays, there are fewer and fewer units to be played, fewer units left to fulfill the time that the section occupies. This poses a problem that the previous model does not have: for this to be true, a listener would have to be familiar with the section in question, remove it and analyze it separately, then reinstall the repetition back into the song. Paradoxically, the section that contains the repetitions is already imprinted on the record: the repetition is already there. The musicologist may prefer the latter, the sociologist the former, the aesthetician both. The analyst should bear in mind the repercussions of both models when considering what repetition is and how it may affect a listener, for it is here that the difference between the heard and the stored music is at its most pronounced.

While the unit of repetition is repeating, there is also, on top of this, the fluctuation of the effect of the repetition, which may not be linear. ‘Effect’ manifests in sympathy with the listener’s specific direction of their attention. Further, there is the incorporeal relational repetition: the contents of the repeating unit relate internally, allowing for the repetition of

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix 1 diagram ‘Repetition Blocks 1-3’ for a more detailed exposition.

relationships. Silence cannot be repeated. If the relation of one sound to another is dependent on there being silence between them—a period without sound in the unit’s repetition—then we can say, however, that that silence is not what is repeated, the relation as engendered by the silence is, and is thus subject to the same criteria mentioned above.

Instead of the incline suggested by the Z/Y axis model, above, it may be better expressed horizontally, with the previous units, faded, graphically represented as being below the horizontal plane. This way—again, if the transposition be allowed—we can see behind, and conjecture as to what follows more clearly: the safety of repetition. A listener can feel safe in saying, ‘what has come before this moment and what is presently occurring will—if I have properly grasped the situation—occur once more.’ Repetition implies continuation: habituation makes us believe that the present is in fact continuous;¹⁵⁷ that “the whole mystical game of loss and salvation is contained in repetition”.¹⁵⁸ Conversely, there is also uncertainty in repetition: I cannot say for certain that the pattern will continue beyond this occurrence/reoccurrence. In parallel with the repetition are other musical events that may well provide clues as to the termination of the repetition.¹⁵⁹ When terminated, I suggest that there is some kind of hang-over of effect: the unit of repetition has gained a momentum, and this cascades over the commencement of the following section as a ghost momentum. This functions on both musematic and discursive levels. I suggest, however, that this is more noticeable on the musematic level.

Consider the chorus in a popular song. The first time that I hear it I am discovering it as it plays through, feeling my way through it, becoming familiar with its architecture. When it

¹⁵⁷ Jameson, Fredric. Prison-House of Language. Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1972. 58.

¹⁵⁸ Deleuze, Gilles. Difference and Repetition. Trans. Paul Patton. London: The Athlone Press, 1994. 6.

¹⁵⁹ Middleton, Richard. "'Play It Again Sam': Some Notes on the Productivity of Repetition in Popular Music." Popular Music 3.Producers and Markets (1983): 235-70. 238.

commences for a second time—either with a verse in between, or as a ‘double-chorus’—I am not so much discovering it throughout its playing as I am returned to it. The metal ‘ghost’ of the previous chorus is activated and I hear the present chorus with the previous chorus in mind. I (potentially) hear two choruses at the same time. The first chorus effectively allows the listener to light up as yet not heard moments in the present chorus. The listener can advance through time to these un-sounded events; they can listen *ahead* of the song, briefly, provided the section in question has articulated itself well enough, and that the listener has previously understood this information. Here, I have traced Jameson’s remarks above, back from their furthest reaches—the field—to the song, and further still to a section of a song and to that section’s makeup: where the ‘code’ of pop music is ever present in our lives, so it must be for the song, and we can now see that the song is a colouring—a rendering of the essence of pop music. We are returned to a familiar paradox here, for one song cannot exemplify every aspect of what it is to be a pop song, but the song in question aspires to be the ultimate exemplification of everything that it (the song) is—autographic, not allographic: singular. This reinforces my claims above regarding the work of phonography as set out by Brown and Gracyk. With a parallax view we can see that what it is that makes up the micro is also that which is responsible for the macro, and vice versa. For, where Merleau-Ponty says that “to see the object, it is necessary to *not* see the play of shadows and light around it”,¹⁶⁰ we make a transposition—as must be made from a discussion regarding visual art—and say that the “shadows and light”¹⁶¹ are emblematic of the particular song, and that the “object”¹⁶² is the field—pop music all—upon which the shadows are cast. We are only ever allowed to glimpse the object *through* the myriad depictions of it, by subtracting their

¹⁶⁰ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Eye and Mind." *Aesthetics*. Ed. Harold Osborne. London: Oxford U.P., 1972. 55-85. 62.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

differences, which are not notateable, for notation will often follow trends. Hence the difference between the song that we hear and that same song that is stored in the medium. Repetition presumes that there is in fact a thing to be repeated, and any acknowledgement of the thing is an abstracting,¹⁶³ a removing, such that as a listener, when I am able to identify a repeating thing, I am undertaking a process of abstraction. When listening, there can be nothing other than an abstracting in accordance with my attentional faculties, the ‘stored’ music, and where and how I am listening. For as Hegel has shown, a thing is only what it is when we come to understand it under the conditions imposed by our relationship the thing, and that it changes when we alter our relationship to it, or become aware of this, which differs from knowing the thing as it exists in-itself.¹⁶⁴ Thus the strive toward the stored—the in-itself—and the acknowledgement of its being inaccessible.

Repetition in song is no less complicated by the observation that *to listen* may well itself be *to repeat*, to say back to oneself concurrent with an event’s occurring that event in accord with one’s direction of attention. (This is why in the kitchen for example, the refrigerator’s hum is apparently absent much of the time.)

Rather than suggesting that it is *through* pop songs that we come know what pop music is—that the flow is from the song to the field—the essence of pop music is approached when considering the problem from the opposite direction. That is, that pop music is projected *through* pop songs. The pop song retrieves only part of the whole of pop music’s code. From all of the information regarding pop music—the field—the song is a choosing; a sieve-like operation is performed, allowing—encoding autographically—only specific aspects through:

¹⁶³ Hanninen, Dora A. "A Theory of Recontextualization in Music: Analyzing Phenomenal Transformations of Repetition." *Music Theory Spectrum* 25.1 (2003): 59-97. 59.

¹⁶⁴ Weiss, Frederick G., ed. *Hegel: The Essential Writings*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974. 51-2.

a Turing-esque de-ciphering filter. For, ‘verse’—the particular—cannot exemplify all that ‘verse’ is, in the sense that as the sum of its parts, ‘verse’—the label attached to the thing—is attached to myriad depictions of ‘verse’ (a clear example would be ‘lyrics’). Were the approach the other way around, then as the analyst, I could well be looking through the pop song to a different music whose whole it is also accessing. So, contrariwise, we approach pop music by leaving to history and sociology, the historical and the social—the vehicular—so that what comes under scrutiny are “secondary and higher-order properties”;¹⁶⁵ what Wittgenstein would call the pursuit of the “*super*-order between—so to speak—*super*-concepts.”¹⁶⁶ For example, consider ‘verse’ outside of its chemistry: that which is responsible for the verse—the actualizing of the verse—is given over in favour of what the verse is transmitting with regard to the extra-musical. Unless the verse is what it is, it cannot transmit what it transmits: this is the link between the content as data, and the super-order or macro-functioning as above the data, but extending from it. This last point is paramount because without there being a thing to analyze in the first instance, there can be no observations, of which this extending is. Simple though this observation is, it must be acknowledged lest the absolute specificity of the content—its *autographicness*—be overlooked as the cause of the effect. We can easily say of a verse that it is not a chorus; this alone places it in opposition to the chorus by virtue of its being different. However, the verse is related the chorus in at least two (macro-functional) ways. Firstly, that they exist in the same song means that they work sympathetically via their temporal relationship, even if there is always another structural element between them, even if they are timbrally unrelated. Each is heard in light of the other; both the verse and the chorus work in reference to each other. Secondly, both verse and

¹⁶⁵ Bayliss, C. A. "Universals, Communicable Knowledge, and Metaphysics." *Universals and Particulars*. Ed. Michael J. Loux. New York: Anchor, 1970. 51.

¹⁶⁶ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 44.

chorus pertain to the song as a whole, of which each is a part, and the song heard is not merely a string of structural devices, but the interrelation of said devices brought about by their differences and similarities, which are observable (there is a reason why a pop song is not simply a repeated chorus or verse). It is as though a brand of Newton's second law of motion is in effect, where both verse and chorus (as well as other structural-devices) exert a force on each other proportional to their 'mass', or what Kerman terms "structural weight".¹⁶⁷

To give an example: when I walk from a darkened room into a lighted one, there is a brief period of adjustment proportional to how dark the darkened room was and how light the lighted one. We can see here that there is no pressing need to comment on any specific song. All I have done here is to say that compositional relationships and differences are present and observable and that they necessarily affect each other. So here, too, as with repetition and the correlation between micro and macro functioning we have to keep in mind the whole of the song, not merely the constituents, as so much musicology does. Nor is there recourse to the sociological, for what has been said here speaks of nothing that the sociologist is interested in: biography, geography, musicianship, lineage, appropriation by a listener and so on. The "investigation [...] is directed not toward phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the 'possibilities' of phenomena."¹⁶⁸ Standing behind the song are all the possible songs, all the possibilities of the field. Altering one note would mean that the inter-note relationships of the song/section are altered. One beat per minute different means that the time between events is lengthened/shortened, and so on. One unit different in whatever instance and the whole will become something different.

¹⁶⁷ Kerman, Joseph. "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out." *Critical Inquiry* 7.2 (1980): 311-31. 324.

¹⁶⁸ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 42.

This project, it should be clear, relies on there being a something that is knowable through its being accessed by particular somethings. Thus, I go to my local record shop and ask for a copy of the latest single by ‘Q’ on vinyl and CD. When I get home I find that there is something wrong with each: the vinyl record and the CD both skip, though in different places. Here we would say—as Danto does in reference to Sartre’s Roquentin¹⁶⁹—that it is only that which holds the song that is damaged, not the song, “which exists independently of its innumerable playings on the same and similar [formats] and does not wear out as the [medium does]”.¹⁷⁰ The following day I purchase the vinyl record and the CD again. This time when I arrive home I decide to play each on a different stereo system: the CD through my small bed side radio/CD player, and the record through my large stereo system in the lounge room. Before I play either, I recall an article entitled “Defining Phonography: An Experiment in Theory” by Eric W. Rothenbuhler and John Durham Peters,¹⁷¹ in which they show that the vinyl record contains “physical analogs”¹⁷² of the sound-waves committed to the master disc, and that the CD contains only data.¹⁷³ What occurs to me as I listen to each is that they are markedly different—not only do they appear to be different, but in fact they *are* different: each system is only capable of relaying parts of the frequency spectrum specific to the design and construction of each. With this in mind I make a series of adjustments and am now able to play each format on the other system and do so. Immediately I notice that the vinyl record, when played though the bed side radio/CD player, does not sound the same as it did on the lounge room stereo. I check all the connections to make sure that I have set it up

¹⁶⁹ Danto, Arthur C. The Transfiguration of the Commonplace. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996. 33.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 33.

¹⁷¹ Rothenbuhler, Eric W. and John Durham Peters. "Defining Phonography: An Experiment in Theory." The Musical Quarterly 81.2 (1997): 242-62.

¹⁷² Ibid. 246.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

properly. I have. I am able to deduce that the radio/CD player relays the information in the vinyl record differently than the lounge room stereo. It is, after all, the same record.

Listening to the CD through the stereo system in the lounge room I notice something peculiar: there is a decided lack of bass frequencies. I approach the amplifier and notice that in making the necessary changes to allow this experiment to continue, I had inadvertently turned the ‘bass’ dial right the way down, so I return it to its former position—neutral. I wonder, ‘*is* it a neutral setting?’ and continue listening, noting that this sounds remarkably *similar* to the record. And that, again, as with the previous instance, information is relayed differently; it is not the case the information that is accessed is different, for it is the same CD.

Music can only be heard when the stored information, be it as data on a CD or as a continuous series of hills and valleys cut into vinyl, is activated—not *transformed* because we simply cannot transform it in the strict sense. It may be true that the CD player-amplifier-speaker chain allows the data on the disc to be heard, but the actual stuff of the disc remains the same. When we hear the music it is as though it plays *atop* the source data; it is an extension of the data. From inactive to active: time unengaged, to time engaged. We can say now that, though the song is time engaged (heard), and though we may be in the presence of this, it does not always follow that we will be engaged with its engagement in time. The question is now: Where is the music? We can easily point to the speaker/s and say: that is where the music is coming from—but asking, Where *is it*, is a different question. For unlike a chair or a pen, music cannot be located with regard to vectors (as points that refer to a specific spatial location), it is incorporeal. Here is the record, here is the record player, and here are the speakers. The music appears within me; you cannot listen *away* from yourself, you cannot listen *at a distance from yourself*, though I am able to locate the source of the

sound (the physics of this process is too complicated to go into here). Is this where the music is? We can say that the music that I hear and the music—or information—stored in the medium are exactly alike apropos structure, notation, duration and so on. The mechanics of each are exactly alike in all ways. The heard music is, however, a version, a simulacrum of the stored. It is not fixed, as the experiment above shows. Where Gracyk says that we allow for circumstantial differences such as “changing the settings on our equipment or buying new speakers”,¹⁷⁴ I interpret this as being the same as saying: I know that this record will sound different when I play it on different equipment, though what unites these different playings is my knowledge that the record is the same in each instance, and that it is in reference to the information stored on the record that I hear the sounds played back by this particular equipment set-up. I perform an act of Gestalt. This act allows me to—whenever I hear a particular song—identify that song. Or at the very least, be able to say that I have heard that song before. Consider a case where I am shown two different images, an apple and an airplane: because the stimulus is different, I respond to each differently. When I am in my car listening to the radio and I hear song ‘X’, I will have a different response to that same song when heard with headphones on. The stimulus is different in each case, and because of this, I respond differently to each. Were there only one piece of stimuli—the picture of the apple—and were I shown this in different scenarios, my response to it would also differ based on the circumstances surrounding each viewing. I recognise it despite the play of light and shadows.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Gracyk, Theodore. *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*. Durham: Duke U.P., 1996. 55.

¹⁷⁵ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Eye and Mind." *Aesthetics*. Ed. Harold Osborne. London: Oxford U.P., 1972. 55-85. 62.

This approach to listening stems from the observation that both our listening and our memory is fallible; that there is no corporeal ‘thing’ to place under a microscope, so to speak. An analysis of music that is neither musicological nor sociological, but is, rather, sonico-structural, is one that is essentially an analysis of what can be remembered, of sound as it is sounding. This should be cause enough to look for a way that reduces this somewhat tenuous hold on the subject. Now, while it is certainly impossible to circumvent this problem entirely, we can at least attempt to do so. The first step in such a task is to explicitly acknowledge that this is indeed something to negotiate. This is how we can approach the problem of perception that was alluded to above, and we do this by becoming aware of both our listening and of our sound memory.

Once this problem is explicitly acknowledged we can then begin to listen with ears that are aware of the problems of ears, allowing us to listen, not so much to the ‘sound of sound’, but to the temporal vectors that these sounds trace; to their arcs, contours, shapes, apparent emphases as relative to, and in light of other such vectors—we listen to the *figurative physics of sound*. One way to consider this difference—a difference that is not merely a difference of language, but one that is indeed borne from language—is that it allows us to contemplate precisely *how* time is occupied with sound, not merely that it is. For, this is what autographic works are, and our listening should be sympathetic to at least this aspect of their nature. How does one negotiate this problem of the ‘sound of sound’, then? The ‘sounding’ is the most readily apparent feature of some sound; it is the first impression that we get of it. For example, before we can say what note is being sounded at a particular instance, we have to listen past the ‘colour’ of that sound, past its ‘shape’ to its (figurative) root: the note. Here, we are without the ‘sound of that sound’: the qualities that made it that sound have been

stripped away. To return: what we are in effect doing is imbuing sound with properties other than simply pitch and duration. It would be like arranging a series of line segments in such a way that they form tangents about an as yet drawn arc, where the traced arc is the sound of sound and the line segments are our attempt to—figuratively—qualify that sound, to give it a sense of being mapped by our listening even though it is itself a map of itself, or rather, that it has the capacity to be thought of as such. This process is about obtaining as much information as is possible regarding sound events. We ask, What is occurring at this moment, and how can we view it with regard to previous moments?

With this mind there is scope enough for the notion that there could be such a thing as negative space regarding sound, where we can consider absences or distances in the same way that we consider presences, themselves either pronounced or subtle, since we are now considering sound as occupying some—albeit ephemeral—‘space’. ‘Space’, in the sense that a physical space is implied by a recording, is a property of the work given primarily by the mix (and in a different way by the composition), where apparent volume, spatialisation, equalisation, and panning can be used to this end. Negative space suggests a point/s of focus, and that focus—the positive ‘image’—is coloured by qualities of the negative space that frames it. (It is in a way similar to saying that you cannot know where the middle of the road is unless they have been to the other side.) The supporting and framing of points of focus is the crux of the idea of negative space, and this is helpful to remember when we are thinking about the vectors that various timbres/sequences trace. To be clear, this is just a conceptual tool that assists in the location of sound events from something of an inverse perspective: rather than listening to the ‘positive imprint’ of sound, we can listen *around* the sound; we listen to sound *relationships* that are of course dependent on the shapes of sounds that engender these relationships. We listen in this way so that we may better ask, What is the

intention of this work? How and where is my ear being guided? What is being suggested by a particular course of events?

CHAPTER 1.

LISTENING.

Throughout the previous chapter I have attempted to highlight the key aspects of the two poles of the sonico-structural approach to the analysis of pop music: the microscopic and the macroscopic. The weight of the argument, I feel, falls to the macroscopic view. Pop music—the entire field—is made up of autographic works, works that are singular by their very nature. By exclusively employing a method of analysis—the microscopic—that speaks directly to that *specificness* is almost a tautology, and can yield only finite results, results that cannot be transferred to other songs. We would have descriptions of *this* timbre, *this* arrangement, *this* pattern and so on. As mentioned earlier, these specifics need to be de-specified, though the implications entailed by the works being autographic should always be borne in mind. There should thus be a cross-talk between the microscopic and the macroscopic so that we are able to enter into a song, ascertain information regarding that song, and then allow that information to be schematised and transposable, for this allows a scope not present in either the strictly microscopic or macroscopic approach. This method also speaks to Kerman's call for hermeneutics to play a larger role in music analysis,¹⁷⁶ so that under Gadamer's reckoning, we deal with the *concern* of the work.¹⁷⁷ This is paralleled by Watts:

¹⁷⁶ Kerman, Joseph. *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology*. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1985. 25.

¹⁷⁷ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Eminent Text and Its Truth." *The Bulletin of Midwest Modern Language Association* 13.1 (1980): 3-10. 4-5.

If you want to study a river, you don't take out a bucketful of water and stare at it on the shore. A river is not its water, and by taking the water out of the river, you lose the essential quality of the river, which is its motion, its activity, its flow.¹⁷⁸

This dichotomy between the work as being the sum of its contents, and the essence of the work as being engendered by the content, is clearly recognisable in film. It is not the events that take place in the film that are the concern of the film; rather, the events depicted in the film are the vehicles for transmitting the concern of the film. For example: in "The Perverts Guide to Cinema", Žižek gives an account of why, in Hitchcock's "The Birds", the birds attack: "[t]he violent attacks of the birds are obviously explosive outbursts of [the] maternal super-ego. Of the maternal figure [...] trying to prevent [a] sexual relationship. So the birds are raw, incestuous energy."¹⁷⁹ It is pointless to count the birds in the scene that Žižek is discussing. Though it may be interesting in and of itself, it does not speak to the concern of either the scene or the whole of the film. This would be tantamount to providing a discourse on the EQ used to treat Britney Spears' voice in "Gimme More" from the album *Blackout*.¹⁸⁰ The question now, is, Where do we find the *total* of an incorporeal thing, of something that really only really exists in memory? It is not possible to actually *pause* a song and observe it statically. It is all motion, as with Watts' river analogy: it takes the full length of a song to be able to say that one has listened to the song. Even though while listening to the song in question, one may be able to successfully conjecture as to forthcoming events, this differs drastically from being able to say with all certainty that an event will or will not take place. And there must certainly be instances where a listener has been misled into

¹⁷⁸ Watts, Allen. Quoted in: Levitin, Daniel J. *This Is Your Brain on Music*. New York: Plume, 2007. 144.

¹⁷⁹ Žižek, Slavoj, Writer/Presenter. *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*. Dir. Sophie Fiennes. DVD. Amoeba Film, 2009.

¹⁸⁰ Spears, Britney. "Gimme More." *Blackout*. Zomba Recording LLC, 2007.

thinking, for example, that they were listening to “The All Golden” by Van Dyke Parks,¹⁸¹ when in fact the record playing was “Left on Silverlake (Ride)” by Madlib,¹⁸² which samples whole sections of the aforementioned song (and even quotes the lyrics in its title). Musical quotation works in a similar way, whereby it is a sequence of notes that is replicated, rather than the recording of that sequence of notes.¹⁸³ Similarly, in the situation where I am listening to a song that I have heard previously, I am only returned to the act of witnessing the song. Gracyk takes a similar position, but with respect to tone-colour, whereby, “one can *only* experience the contribution of that tone [-colour] by actually *hearing* it again in its total musical context.”¹⁸⁴ That is to say, I will always be at a remove, since, according to Michael Nyman, music is “not perpetually ready-made, but perpetually to-be-made.”¹⁸⁵ That is, without a time dimension, there is no music. Paradoxically then, the listener is only afforded the opportunity of the total musical work once the song has finished playing.

+–

PARALLEL CACHE MEMORY LISTENING.

This is where the notion of a parallax listening comes in, and though it may well be the case that this is how people actually listen, outlining it formally is required. This means that we should listen from several ‘angles’ simultaneously; that we establish a set of positions relative to the song that acquire different types of information. These positions I call caches,

¹⁸¹ Parks, Van Dyke. “The All Golden.” Song Cycle. Warner Bros., 1968. (CD1. Track 2.)

¹⁸² Madlib. “Left on Silverlake (Ride).” The Beat Konducta Vol. 1-2. Stones Throw, 2006. (CD1. Track 3.)

¹⁸³ For an example of this, see: Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P., 1996. 1-2.

¹⁸⁴ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P., 1996. 61.

¹⁸⁵ Michael Nyman, quoted in: Frith, Simon. Performing Rites. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996. 153.

where a cache is defined as containing information of one type. Theoretically the listener will establish a system for—what I term—parallel cache-memory listening. If we accept that the total musical work can only be fully grasped once the song has finished, then the cache with the greatest capacity—the one that only fills and never empties—should be large enough to accommodate the song from start to finish. What type of information then, gets stored in this cache? It is perhaps best to imagine the contents of this cache with regard to vectors: there is a kind of addition of forces of varying magnitude and direction. These vectors are borne from being able to listen to a passage of a song in terms of the devices used, where the magnitude of a vector is largely enforced by the overall mix: we ask, Where is *this* particular sound event in relation to other sound events as they occur over the duration of the song? By device, I am referring to Addition, Simultaneity, Repetition, and so forth, which are occupied with specifics—specific notes, timbres, durations (which will be discussed later). Devices and their interrelation, then, are what we are left with when we refuse specific details into this cache. Further, there is the distinction between the device as an action—addition, say—and the effect that the action has on the song, for the song can be said to be the product of a number of devices (and their contents) used in combination and in sequence. How, though, are we able to discuss the effect that these devices have? Is it even possible to say that a device affects a song? If it were the case that pop songs were not autographic, then we would be able to discuss devices in terms of the effect they have *on the song*, as is the case when—as Gracyk outlines—“a pianist performs [whereby] we get an interpretation or profile of a work”.¹⁸⁶ there is then the opportunity for comparing different versions of a song. So, instead of effect, purpose—to what end is a device apparently implemented? The reason that we cannot enquire as to the effect that a device has on a pop song is because the song is the result

¹⁸⁶ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 88.

of the use of a number of devices. Effect implies that an action can be performed on the song, that it is susceptible to influence. Clearly this is not the case, and in fact suggests that the musical score is the work; that the sounds enact the score, rather than allowing that the sounds are integral to the work, that they are *of* the work. However, it is certainly the case that musical/sonical devices have an effect on the listener: the listener is the site of effect, and musical devices are the cause of this. Because this memory-cache is concerned with compiling a map of a song, it has to be able to overlook the emotional cues that the song outputs. To this point, there are two questions: why and how. ‘Why?’: since emotional response is separate from the song, outside of the song so to speak, it is listener-specific. That is to say, there is no inherent emotion in music.¹⁸⁷ What moves one listener emotionally will not necessarily move another. ‘How?’: simply put, the song under consideration has to be listened to a large number of times. After a time we will become aware of our responses to the song (or the parts of the song that have an effect on us). As with the ‘why’, our response is not built into the song; we have to listen to the song again and again until we have crossed a threshold of sorts to get to the in-and-of-itself of the song’s architecture without emotional inflection having any bearing on this. This is perhaps the clearest example of ‘listening at an angle.’ Peripheral listening: a bypassing of emotional response. This is similar to the detection of colour/motion in a dimly lit room: the photoreceptors in our eyes (our rods and cones) are better able to discern colour/motion when it is adjacent to us due to their placement in the eye. That is to say, by not looking directly at the object/action, but by using our peripheral vision, it is better grasped.

¹⁸⁷ Frith, Simon. Performing Rites. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996. 26.

Contrary to, and in tandem with this cache, is the one that reflects the synchronic aspect of the listening experience, of our listening to a song *in* time, rather than across time. Because of this it is necessarily the smallest cache and is responsible for the vertical analysis of the song, and of small (musematic) units on the horizontal plane. This works similar to a constant ‘two steps forward, one step back’ system. If we imagine that a song extends from point A to point B, unravelling itself to full extension, then this cache would be a floating point that follows the extension of the song. In its following the ‘present moment’ of the song, it is able to extend backward, to increase in size, then ‘catch up’ with the song, which allows us to listen to the ‘present’ of the song with all previous ‘presents’ in mind. It is a fluctuation in the capacity of the cache that allows, for example, a riff that repeats to be heard in the context of the other sonic events that are occurring simultaneously within the space of the riff. What is curious here is that unlike the previous cache, this one has to constantly accept and expel information given by the song, since it is unlikely that the level of detail that this cache affords can be maintained throughout the whole of the song. It allows for musemes to be *re-read*, or indeed, *re-listened to*, so that the song’s own history is constantly engaged (before there is Nyman’s *to be* there is “being”, or the present moment of the song, and before that, “was”). For this to be possible, we have to listen to our own *listening*, as if the ear is the site of our perception of sound and the brain is ancillary to the act of listening, so that it has to actively seek out the sound. This creates a distance where there is no distance because it creates a second listener, or perhaps it more accurate to say that it divides the listener into two. The distance between the two means that one of them is in a position to listen before the other. This is the crucial element of the cache. In practice the listener is able to decide what the *size* of the ‘present moment’ of the song is, as well as being able to vary this *size* where appropriate. In reality this may be how people actually listen to music but I suspect that the

process that enables this to happen occurs subconsciously. By formalising this it becomes a conscious act, and a byproduct of this is that the memory-trace that the song leaves is better articulated since a re-reading is effectively a repetition. An analogy might be: rather than setting a coin down on a lump of dough to get an impression of the coin, the coin is pushed into the dough. In the collating/collecting of information, that information is schematised in a way that corresponds directly to that of the first cache as outlined above, which is supported by Levitin.¹⁸⁸

The parallel cache-memory system of listening/analysing finds an echo in Gadamer's hermeneutic account of reading.¹⁸⁹ The deciphering/recognition of written characters is not yet reading but both prior to and essential for the possibility of reading, which is the "result of an idealising abstraction."¹⁹⁰ In this distinction we have both the small cache—deciphering/recognition—and the larger—the abstracted—as well as the subsumption of information by the larger of the smaller. If I were to ask: Bring to mind Kylie Minogue's "Can't get You Out of My Head", it is unlikely that you will try to remember the first measure of the song and mentally *play it through*. This would of course require that you first remember the start of the song. Instead, I would posit that a *sense* of the song, perhaps derived from or related to the song's peak-data, is brought to mind (this point is culled from Levitin's discussion on different accounts of how memories are recalled, and also assumes the unlikely event that something will be recalled in its totality¹⁹¹). It is an abstraction in a similar vein as the larger cache, such that specific information about the song serves to build

¹⁸⁸ Levitin, Daniel J. *This Is Your Brain on Music*. New York: Plume, 2007. 164.

¹⁸⁹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Eminent Text and Its Truth." *The Bulletin of Midwest Modern Language Association* 13.1 (1980): 3-10. 4.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Levitin, Daniel J. *This Is Your Brain on Music*. New York: Plume, 2007. 158-167

the picture that the large cache is designed for. Key here is the fact that pop songs are autographic: unlike, say, a work by J.S. Bach, where, if we were asked to bring to mind the “Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1: Prelude and Fugue No. 6 in D minor” we have dozens of versions/arrangements/recordings to choose from, an overall sense of the different recordings may be brought to mind, perhaps some kind of median version, the pop song is singular. Here, we should recall Gracyk’s remark about needing to play a record in order to experience tone-colour. Further, we could say that even though we may be able to bring to mind some sound, there is no actual sound there, since there would be no compression and rarefaction of air, nor is there any real time dimension to this recollection. Even if we take into account the number of times we have heard the pop song, and the different situations where we heard it, the aim is to recall the idealized version: the version stored in the medium. So, as with Gadamer’s text/reading, the pop song then is a conveyance of the sense of the pop song as the information committed to a medium.¹⁹²

Theoretically, the result of the combination of the two caches is a detailed architecture of the song. One cache to accept the song as it unfolds in all of its minute detail, and another cache to decode that information and place it in the context of the song as a whole: events and relationships, linkages and reiterations, paths trodden and insinuations and implications, accents and weight. It is the play of the physics of the song as both static object and temporal incorporeality.¹⁹³ It should result in a map that is a combination of two-dimensional, three-

¹⁹² Gadamer, Hans-Georg. “The Eminent Text and Its Truth.” The Bulletin of Midwest Modern Language Association 13.1 (1980): 3-10. 5.

¹⁹³ The description that follows only relates to recordings that are in stereo. Should a recording in mono come under consideration, the only difference is the loss of the stereo field, of the width of the recording. To make the transition to mono easier, we should be remembered that high frequencies are more directional than low frequencies, which tend to fan out. So that even without the strict width that stereo enables, there is a width of sorts, and we need only think of the adjectives that we use to describe different sounds to see that we recognise this.

dimensional and four-dimensional representations. Before I describe the aspects of the dimensions, it is important to note that when we listen to music, we listen ‘facing the music’, so to speak. We do not ‘watch it pass by’ our field of vision as we would a train, or any other object. It comes into us. Two-dimensionally we get the vertical and horizontal aspects of the song: the placement of sound in the stereo field. Three-dimensionally, character of sound is recognised, spatial depth is recognised, and the mix is present. Four-dimensionally, temporality is introduced and the map then *becomes* the song, where all the contours and arcs of the sound are traced as a whole and as a combination of timbres and settings (by ‘settings’, I mean the location of different timbres as enforced by the mix). This map cannot be drawn, it can only be thought of. It is like an organic, growing concertina. It brings all of the past moments of the song up to the present, at all times, over time. It *gathers itself*, forbidding the loss of information over time through the fading of memory. The song is reified mentally. Where an ‘instant’ of the song or snap-shot of the smallest ‘slice’ is represented as having three dimensions (the vertical, the horizontal, and ‘the mix’), we can say that all moments of the song are able to be represented like this, as a succession of three dimensional pictures or objects. Here, though, the parameters for the ‘size’ of each dimension are unclear: we can either say that as the song is playing, as it is borne from speakers, it ‘fans out’, extending across the three physical dimensions relative to the force that the speakers expel the music with, as if the music were a viscous substance. There is a problem, though: we hear music internally, that is, not ‘at a distance’. This runs contrary to, but is not entirely mutually exclusive with the previous. Our perception of spatial depth in music as engendered by the mix is actually one of relative depth. It is the interrelation of the sound elements that gives rise to depth. Put simply, different songs, with their respective mixes, present different ‘depths’, different heights and widths. They define their own parameters. Instead of trying to

imagine these as finite, as having edges or boundaries for the ease of the construction of our map, we remember that our map cannot actually be constructed unless we limit all of the dimensions, for a “limit is a line drawn arbitrarily by line-drawing beings”.¹⁹⁴ We cannot point to the end of a sound;¹⁹⁵ we cannot say where a sound *is* in any finite way unless we have recourse to frequency analysis, or in a broader way to sound’s physically effecting objects. But even this fails: a 4kHz sine tone does not exist at any other frequency than that of 4khz, and yet it appears as though some type of space is occupied by it. This becomes far more complex when we imagine the following: imagine that same 4kHz tone at a high volume, and then at a very low volume. One surely seems *bigger* than the other, seems to occupy more space in us than the other—this is because the louder of the two tones displaces more air than the quieter one: the speakers expel that selfsame tone with more energy. Though in both cases there is no discernible *boundary* to the sound. This much is clear and obvious.¹⁹⁶

To return to the map of the song as a sequence of three-dimensional objects, which we are now able to recognise as being without boundaries. That the axes extend outward, that they fade out, is perhaps more convenient than saying they extend to infinity. What we end up with is something similar to a photograph of a busy, multi-lane city street, taken with an extremely long exposure—an exposure that is equal to the length of the song, to be exact.¹⁹⁷ However, the crucial difference is that we can enter into the photograph and contemplate all of the instances of the cars’ passage from one point in space to another, and all of the

¹⁹⁴ May, Keith M. Nietzsche: On the Struggle between Knowledge and Wisdom. New York: St. Martins Press, 1993. 64.

¹⁹⁵ See Appendix 1 diagrams ‘Note Width’ and ‘Line Riff Cross-Section.’

¹⁹⁶ A good point of reference for the visualisation of this can be found in: Gibson, David. The Art of Mixing: A Visual Guide to Recording, Editing, and Production. Vallejo: MixBooks, 1997. 9-12.

¹⁹⁷ See Appendix 1 diagrams ‘Multi-Lane 1’ and ‘Multi-Lane 2.’

instances in between and the surrounding environs; where the syntax of instances in sequence, and the implicit (synchronic and diachronic) timbral relationships of the song can be ‘observed’. We are afforded various and overlapping perspectives, allowing for the fluid transition between different magnifications, different angles of intersection with the song, different fidelities or resolutions. A visual analogy: different ‘dots per square inch’ resolutions. This is the small cache and large cache and the crosstalk between the two. Ultimately, what I am attempting to show is that analytic listening is drastically different from pleasure listening. The river runs backwards: we go to the song, rather than letting the song come to us; listening with intent—active listening—rather than passive listening. If “mainstream pop is a BODY culture, oriented around dance and spectacle,”¹⁹⁸ then we have to disconnect both the body and the eyes, disallowing the cultural aspect to weigh on the analysis in order to get to the in-itself of the sound-structure.

+ -

MAPS AND VOCABULARY.

What surfaces as a result of this method of listening is a vocabulary comprised of non sound-specific words, picking up from my earlier remark about considering sound in terms of vectors. We can use this vocabulary to describe musical events in non musical ways, and it transpires that these terms can be divided into those that pertain to either a state, or an action. For example, the state Chorus can be introduced by a series of actions committed either simultaneously or in sequence—or both—by virtue of its being preceded by said events. That

¹⁹⁸ Reynolds, Simon. Bring the Noise. London: Faber & Faber, 2007. 14.

is to say, there is a distinction between the Chorus and the events that come prior to it, so that in order to hear the Chorus, there has to be a transition *to* the Chorus: *Difference*. Difference as the precise point of the delineation between two sections is engaged as a vertical division that has horizontal (temporal) implications. On one side *this* and on the other side *that*. Difference itself is without sound, and brings about a period of acclimatisation, where we then go about familiarising ourselves with the new terrain, with new relationships and symbioses. Even if difference is marked only by the addition of one element, as in the case of, say, the introduction to The Human League’s “Open Your Heart”—where a drum pattern is established, then a single-note bass line (with a slow sinusoidal filter) is added—the difference entailed by this addition changes the soundscape irrevocably. In this brief instance *Difference* is marked by the action *Addition*, which entails a *Change* that engenders a period of *Acclimatisation*, where the listener adjusts to the new timbral and spatial (mix) relationships. Here we get a glimpse into the way the map of the song works.

This labeling however, is dependent upon the distance that we place ourselves relative to the song, for Chorus itself can also be considered as a succession of actions: *this* series of notes, followed by *this* series of notes, placed atop *this* drum pattern and so forth. At the furthest distance from the song, we would see something akin to the classic Tin Pan Alley AABA model, where the only differences that are noticeable are those of the greatest magnitude.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, if we look to the Human League example above, it is possible to read it at an even greater level of detail, so instead of having simply a (two bar) ‘drum pattern’ we could introduce the placement of the individual drum components—snare drum, kick drum, hi-hat, tom-tom—in the stereo field, as well as the relative

¹⁹⁹ See Appendix 1 diagram ‘ABA.’

presence/absence of each and the various equalisation properties that they exhibit, not to mention the further possibilities that the addition of the bass line would entail. Further still, the equalisation properties of the sounds that we hear are dependent on the play back system through which we hear that music. From the musematic and its subdivisions through to the riff, or phrase, through to the section (verse/bridge/chorus), through to the whole (song), the vocabulary that seems most appropriate for describing aspects of the song from these vantages is (under my reckoning) exactly alike. Terms like Addition, Subtraction, Individuation, Unit/Combination, Simultaneity, Plateau, Difference, Relationship, Augmentation, can all be transposed to suit the vantage point, where some terms subsume others. A sequence of additions and subtractions and augmentations could be subsumed by the term, 'unit'/'group', at a greater distance from the song. The vantage point determines the resolution, which determines what is observable.

The map of the song is thus a simulation of the song in a manner similar to saying that the song we hear is a rendering of the song on the record. This is as close as we can possibly get to that song as it is stored on the record. We conjecture as to its make-up using the song that we hear as a guide, listening again and again so as to refine the map, to have it better articulated in our minds. The biggest barrier here is obvious, and that is trying to negotiate temporality and what temporality entails—specifically, its relation to memory. We encounter something of a paradox here, for the temporality of music—of sound—automatically entails a constant Difference. But this difference can be thought of both objectively, and speculatively. Objectively—if we take repetition into consideration—we can say that the same event, the unit of repetition on the level of the score, occurs X amount of times in sequence; that at different points in time that unit occurs, and so each instance of its playing will be in

reference to a different set of previous instances. We can say this without having to listen to its passage, provided of course that there is a score, or that we have retroactively constructed one (real or imagined) from previous listenings. Although we cannot say for certain what the effect of repetition is (speculation) we can certainly say that it does have an effect. Indeed it must because of the constant difference entailed by temporality. There is a parallel here between Levitin and our map.

Music works because we remember the tones we have just heard and are relating them to the ones that are now being played. Those groups of tones—phrases—might come up later in the piece being played in a variation or transposition that tickles out memory systems at the same time as it activates our emotional centers.²⁰⁰

Because our theoretical map, as mentioned earlier, is able to function like a concertina, has the capacity to pull all past moments of the song continually up to the present and all subsequent *presents*, it short-circuits any urge to describe the effect that repetitions have on the listener, for the map, as we can now see speaks directly to Levitin's comment. It brings with it the traces of references. We cannot conjecture as to what the listener *feels* because this is external to the song, but the actions that would bring about this (potential) response are all contained in the map. Regardless of whether or not we decide that the map/simulation is the most appropriate method of analysis, we have to concede that a map of sorts is constructed in any listening situation, be that in speech or music. "Memory affects the music-listening experience so profoundly that it would not be hyperbole to say that without memory there would be no music."²⁰¹ So the problem of this constant difference that temporality entails is

²⁰⁰ Levitin, Daniel J. *This Is Your Brain on Music*. New York: Plume, 2007. 167.

²⁰¹ Ibid. 166-7.

not merely taken as a given in the map/simulation, it is an integral part of it as even this cursory look at repetition shows. And as mentioned in the methodology section that takes the repetition of a chorus into consideration, a metal ‘ghost’ of the previous chorus is activated. The present chorus is heard with the previous chorus in mind. There are (potentially) two choruses heard at the same time. The first chorus effectively allows the listener to light up as yet not heard moments in the present chorus. This idea speaks directly to the notion of the parallel cache-memory system of listening/analysis.

+ -

THE SOUND OF POP MUSIC.

“Once a bandwagon is under way the majors [record labels] are happy to climb aboard—to elbow their way to the front—but they are rarely in the drivers seat.”²⁰²

“Pop music [...] absorbs musical sounds from everywhere.”²⁰³

There has to exist prior to the pop song something that pop music can appropriate and reconfigure, be that adoption sonic, musical, or structural. But it is more than an adoption. It is a reconfiguring, for the pop music matrix will not allow the full scope of the connotation of the adopted device to be present. Here the division between pop and non pop is both noticeable and fragile. It is not a strict demarcation; it is fluid and malleable. What is crucial

²⁰² Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P., 2005. 19.

²⁰³ Frith, Simon, Will Straw and John Street, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Pop & Rock. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001. 97.

to reinforce at this point is the notion that we are dealing with *degrees*: to what degree does a song manifest a particular genre.

At the close of “The Grain of the Voice”, Barthes leaves the voice aside to contemplate grain in instrumental music.²⁰⁴ Here, Barthes “can hear with certainty [...] that the harpsichord playing of Wanda Landowska comes from her inner body and not from the petty digital scramble of so many harpsichordists (so much so that it is a different instrument).”²⁰⁵ And Reynolds too incorporates non-vocal sounds when he reflects on both Neil Young’s voice, and Neil Young’s guitar’s “voice”.²⁰⁶ For the voice, grain—being more than merely timbre—is the friction between music and language.²⁰⁷ That is, the friction between sound and what it is that is sounded because Barthes excludes the message of the text here: it is language *qua* language, language as the act of transmission. My hypothesis is that—at the limit—pop music is opposed to grain precisely because of the friction entailed by it. Pragmatically, pop sees grain as something to overcome. It is too loaded a thing, it adds a further layer of information that unnecessarily hinders the intended immediacy. For the voice, the lyrics of the song and the notes assigned to them should be enough to communicate whatever it is that is in communication. Grain is something to be tamed in the same way that being out of tune is something that needs to be rectified. To be out of tune is to be at a distance from some real point, but for non pop music this is not something negative, or at least, not to the degree that it is with pop music: “When a performance is communicating you don’t worry at the time that something might be out of tune or out of time if you have

²⁰⁴ Barthes, Roland. “The Grain of the Voice.” *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana, 1977. 179-89. 88.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 189.

²⁰⁶ Reynolds, Simon. *Bring the Noise*. London: Faber & Faber, 2007. 172.

²⁰⁷ Barthes, Roland. “The Grain of the Voice.” *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana, 1977. 179-89. 185.

captured some magic.”²⁰⁸ Small wonder, then, that pop production is often said to be slick, which implies quite literally that there is little to no opportunity for any purchase; that it slips through the listeners grasp. Indirectly, this notion can be transposed to align with the pop song’s brief life span.²⁰⁹ Perhaps the move toward immediacy and clarity entailed by a lessening of grain is sought precisely because of the brief life span. It is as though a pop song has to be fully and immediately grasped before it is made obsolete by newer chart entries. It is possible to imagine a sliding scale that goes from less grain to more grain that vaguely aligns with the scale pop through non pop. If the grain “is the body in the voice as it sings,”²¹⁰ the “*stuff* of the voice”,²¹¹ then the grain of the voice is housed in the body of the voice as potential, to be masked/tamed or to be accessed/allowed to surface. This is why we find a lot of exaggerated vibrato and tremolo in the pop voice, particularly the female voice (and exaggeration in general in both male and female voices), where expressivity is felt to be in pyrotechnic displays of vocal bombast²¹²—sonically and notationally, rather than in the voice itself. It is as though expressivity is *beyond* the voice for pop music: not in the voice itself, but what the voice can be made to do. The actual stuff of the voice is near mute beneath this presentation, and is why ‘plastic’ is an apt description, for, while any and all sound *has* grain to varying degree, ‘plastic’ speaks to a ‘sheen’ more readily than it does to grain. When a singer’s voice is captured by a microphone, and subsequently processed/mixed, a series of contractions and extensions take place. Contraction in dynamic range, and in overall frequency spectrum and specific bandwidths, and extension in specific frequency bands, and

²⁰⁸ Hentschel, David, in: Cunningham, Mark. Good Vibrations: A History of Record Production. Surrey: Castle Communications 1996. 174.

²⁰⁹ Frith, Simon. The Sociology of Rock. London: Constable, 1978. 12.

²¹⁰ Barthes, Roland. "The Grain of the Voice." Image, Music, Text. London: Fontana, 1977. 179-89. 188.

²¹¹ Reynolds, Simon. Bring the Noise. London: Faber & Faber, 2007. 171.

²¹² Ibid.

the extension of the voice—extension as in ‘extended piano’—through studio manipulation. Pop production is not so much concerned with maintaining the integrity of the voice: untouched by the technology of the time—the then present—the voice would not synchronise with the sound of the music. So the voice has to be acted upon with a similar degree of the essence of the present (studio technology), so that music and voice are sympathetic. Viewed like this, we can see that there is increasingly less and less room for grain in pop music.

Pop is reductive when it adapts something from without pop. The adaptation occurs on a textual/literal level. It is as though at some point in the transition to pop music, the thing to be adapted is vocalised, is described, and in doing so something essential to the original is lost. For example: Britney Spears’ track “The Beat Goes On”²¹³ from *...Baby One More Time*—which is a cover of the Sonny and Cher song of the same name²¹⁴—borrows extensively from the Jungle/Drum and Bass idiom; the drum patterns, the basslines, and the filter sweeps. The tension, suspense and sense of space essential to Drum and Bass, however, is displaced in the Spears track. The ‘science’ of intricate rhythm programming is reduced to a base level, so that it bears a resemblance Drum and Bass, but is not Drum and Bass. The effects of the devices are given over in favour of the mechanics of the devices (Roni Size/Reprazent won the 1997 Mercury Prize with the Drum and Bass album *New Forms*,²¹⁵ *...Baby One More Time* was released in 1999 and went 14x Platinum in the U.S.A.²¹⁶). Perhaps this process is symptomatic of all pop music, so that it is possible to say all that pop music needs is a glancing reference to sound/device from without pop; that the re-

²¹³ Spears, Britney, “The Beat Goes On.” *...Baby One More Time*. Jive, 1999. (CD1. Track 4.)

²¹⁴ Sonny and Cher. “The Beat Goes On.” *In Case You’re In Love*. Atco Records, 1967.

²¹⁵ “1997 Shortlist - Barclaycard Mercury Prize”. 03/01/2010.
<<http://www.mercuryprize.com/aoty/shortlist.php?Year=1997>>.

²¹⁶ “RIAA Gold and Platinum”. 03/01/2010. <<http://riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php?table=tblTop100>>.

contextualising serves to strip any original of its social/historical importance and functions solely as something to be *fed into* pop music processes. It is as though pop music, in this instance, has the ability to synthesise Drum and Bass elements, or contrariwise, that the elements of Drum and Bass have the capacity to be refigured into pop music.

+ -

ADOPTION AND RECONFIGURATION.

When it is adopted/reconfigured by pop music, the device/sound is *new* again if we consider pop music as the site of a kind of new. This is hard-wired into pop music and is why there is usually a considerable sonic gulf between two albums by the same artist/group, not to mention the difference between decades. This is but one of the reasons why pop songs have a (built in) short life span. The *new* that pop music seeks is in a constant state of generation and renewal, itself being replaced with something *newer* (also, consider the *new* in the myriad costume/set design changes that pop artists/groups like Madonna/Kylie Minogue/Steps/Britney Spears et al. make during a concert).

The sound of pop music, then, is vehicular. Sound from without pop music is forced into pop music in such a way as to retain the essential properties of the form of the sound (so that it is still recognisable), but discards/disregards the finer points of the sound that made it relevant in its original context. Reynolds has a slightly different take on sounds from the ‘underground’ finding their way to pop music (for Reynolds, ‘pop’ is the abbreviation of ‘popular’):

Like a successful genre characteristic, electronic dance innovations achieve their highest success by becoming clichés: sounds so good that nobody can resist using them. (At least until they are all used up, at which point the underground abandons them to mainstream pop, and dismisses the sound as ‘corny’ and ‘cheesy’. Some sounds do enjoy an afterlife, though, coming back under the sign of camp ironic nostalgia.)²¹⁷

Turntable scratching is a particularly good case in point partly because the sound is so readily recognisable. As sound, scratching is strangely overt; it is an act as well as a sound. There is almost no mistaking it, and yet there are innumerable cases (particularly in the area of beat-juggling) where the actual scratching sound is hidden from the listener by the DJ’s dexterous manipulation of the cross-fader, so as to show the result of the technique, and not the sound of the technique itself. When pop music uses scratching, it uses *the sound of scratching*. I would go so far as to say that none of the humour or social/musical commentary that arises from the deft selection of a certain record makes its way into the pop song. Further, it is a rarity for the record being scratched in the pop song to be ‘revealed,’ for the part of the record to be heard at its original speed, unaffected, because there is in fact no actual *record selection*. The song “Tik Tok” by KESHA²¹⁸ features the sound of the vocal track as if on a turntable that has the power turned off at the end of certain phrases, slowing down and lowering in pitch; the implication is that the record selected by the producer to engender this effect is in fact the very song that we are listening to—as if the copy of the song that I am listening to is being manipulated before my very ears. (Often with modern pop music, in place of turntablism, it is the producer’s/engineer’s skill with a sampler that

²¹⁷ Reynolds, Simon. Bring the Noise. London: Faber & Faber, 2007. 321.

²¹⁸ KESHA. “Tik Tok.” Tik Tok. RCA, 2009. (CD 1. Track 5.)

produces an effect similar to that of scratching, which in essence is the ability to edit in realtime. Realtime however, is not a concern for pop, only the illusion of realtime, hence the editing of vocals at the level of the syllable.) It is almost the opposite of how scratching is used in hip-hop, so that the technique is heard, and the sample is not. For the pop song, scratching is merely a device; for the hip-hop track, it is expression, comment, art, knowledge, talent. The same can be said of rap in pop, where instead of it teeming with “history, political critique, innuendo, sarcasm and wit,”²¹⁹ it is essentially reduced to the play of staccato syllables across a timeline, as evidenced by the introduction to Sinitta’s song “Toy Boy” from 1987 (produced by Stock, Aitken and Waterman).²²⁰

The *NSYNC album *Celebrity*²²¹ is littered with the hyper-editing techniques most commonly found in the Warp records back catalogue, particularly artists like Aphex Twin, Autechre, and Squarepusher, where the sub-divisions of the musical measure are articulated at increasingly smaller and smaller intervals: 64th notes, 128th notes, 256th notes and onward. Though, there is something tangibly different about the way that a borrowed device is implemented by pop music than in its original context. What that difference is, should be quite clear: pop music does not have an attachment to the past, only the present, and a byproduct of this is that what lies beyond the present is simply a series of consecutive ‘presents’ divorced from their ‘pasts’. All time is collapsed to ‘the moment’, the ‘now’, change is all that there is.²²² For non-pop, a sense of history and musical lineage is present. There is a dialogue with history, such that Reynolds can write that, for Mantronik “the history

²¹⁹ Demers, Joanna. "Sampling the 1970s in Hip-Hop." *Popular Music* 22.1 (2003): 41-56. 41.

²²⁰ Sinitta. "Toy Boy." Fanfare Records, 1987. (CD1. Track 6.)

²²¹ *NSYNC. *Celebrity*. Jive, 2001. (CD1. Track 7.)

²²² Grossberg, Lawrence. "Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock and Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life." *Popular Music* 4 (1984): 225-58. 229.

of Black Dance Music doesn't begin with James Brown, Sly Stone, George Clinton, even Van McCoy or Chic; it begins with Kraftwerk, and flowers with Trevor Horn's Art of Noise";²²³ so that in 1994, hip-hop ethos spans at least the distance between Oval's *Systemisch*, and The Beastie Boys' *Ill Communication*,²²⁴ is why the song "Louie, Louie" has approximately 1,200 versions,²²⁵ is why Philip Glass is credited with a remix of Aphex Twin's "ICCT Hedral" on the *Donkey Rhubarb* EP;²²⁶ is why Morley can hear bebop in Detroit Techno²²⁷ (Juan Atkins and 3MB, in a joint production, have a track called "Jazz is the Teacher"²²⁸). This dialogue is clearly not linear, and is one that seemingly is without end. This is something that Morley stresses throughout "Words and Music."

Key here is the notion that something can be new *for* pop music, that something previously foreign to pop music can enter into the pop music vocabulary—be assimilated by pop—regardless of whether or not its place of origin still has an attachment to said device. It is as though pop music presumes a perpetual 'year zero' with each release, obliterating the past and proclaiming only the present, which is perhaps what Morley would call the "flickering history of newness and change".²²⁹ This presents a conundrum when there is a particular sound/device/effect that repeatedly charts well. While the newer entries to the charts signal the age of the previous entries (and thus of the particular meme), and although they may not chart higher or stay in the charts for as long, the movement accrues a viscosity,

²²³ Reynolds, Simon. *Bring the Noise*. London: Faber & Faber, 2007. 40.

²²⁴ Considering that Oval's work is largely sampling and processing; the bedrock of hip hop technique. (Release dates courtesy: Morley, Paul. *Words and Music*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004. 192)

²²⁵ Plasketes, George. "Re-Flections on the Cover Age: A Collage of Continuous Coverage in Popular Music." *Popular Music* 28.2 (2005): 137-61. 149.

²²⁶ Fink, Robert. "Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the Twilight of the Canon." *American Music* 16.2 (1998): 135-79. 155.

²²⁷ Morley, Paul. *Words and Music*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004. 143

²²⁸ Atkins, Juan and 3MB. "Jazz Is the Teacher." Metroplex, 1993.

²²⁹ Morley, Paul. *Words and Music*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004. 123.

slowing it until it abandons the sound/device/effect. It basically amounts to an overlapping series of off-set bell curves, of the law of diminishing returns as applied to different, and concurrent devices. Rather than having any negative connotations this aspect helps to define a point in pop's time. A caveat: it would be foolish to assume that a song that charts higher than another exhibits more—and more coherently—of what it means to be a pop song, for the charts are an “industry construct bearing no relation to any notion of fair play”.²³⁰

The ‘new for pop’ device (consider the sizeable influence of Timbaland and Missy Elliott on pop music, such that in 2003 Timbaland was working with Justin Timberlake: “Cry Me A River” went to number 3 in the pop charts²³¹) undergoes a process of refinement in accordance with pop's own specifications. It cannot be merely repositioned. Part of my hypothesis is that this is because—as with the Spears/Drum and Bass example, above—there would ensue a clash of motives. The appropriated device is viewed solely as data, as information that could contribute to the becoming of a pop song, something to mold and reshape, stretch and tear. Conversely, pop does not adapt just any device, at least not in any overt manner. This much is obvious. Of particular interest, for example, is that Morley can hear aspects of minimalism as well as the drone of The Stooges in Kylie Minogue's “Can't get you out of my head”.²³² This is not to say, however, that these aspects that Morley finds in the song are actually there, more that one *can* evidence them. So here we can see that the reference is a glancing one and that the full extent of the device *cannot fit* into pop. The idea of being able to ‘fit something in’ also speaks to the mixing/engineering practices of limiting

²³⁰ Ibid. 203.

²³¹ Cry Me a River - Justin Timberlake". 15/01/2010. <<http://www.billboard.com/song/justin-timberlake/cry-me-a-river/4260166#/song/justin-timberlake/cry-me-a-river/4260166>>.

²³² Morley, Paul, writer/presenter. Pop! What is it Good For? Dir. Mike Connolly. BBC Scotland, 2008.

(whereby a 'ceiling' is set, typically just below the zero db mark on the master fader, so that no matter how loud any individual track is, when combined the song will never exceed this ceiling and clip/distort) and compression (which reduces the difference between loud and soft, so that there is a perceived overall loudness).

COVERS.

The dialogue that pop has with the present (and consequentially, history) is a superficial one, gleaning only the characteristics that would primarily be use to describe the sound-source(s) (the literal/textual, from above). Somewhat identikit-like. The dialogue that pop is able to have with the present is the *result* of the dialogue that (current) pop and non-pop has with the history of both pop and non pop. In this light it is as though pop music circumvents history, or at least is only connected to it peripherally—only as a consequence of its being. Though, what of the myriad cases of pop songs covering other songs, be they pop or not? For one thing, the source song is, in the case of the cover song, rendered allographic. It is merely notes and lyrics (not necessarily structure) that are reinstalled into the current ‘state’ of pop. Firstly, we cannot assume that the audience knows that the song is a cover. For example, it is doubtful that the audience for Gwen Stefani knows that her song “Rich Girl”²³³ is a cover of/based on “If I Were A Rich Man,” from Fiddler On The Roof, written by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick. So let us consider Britney Spears’ cover of the Arrows song “I love Rock ‘n’ Roll”²³⁴ perhaps best popularised by Joan Jett and The Blackhearts (neither of which featured any scratching, unlike the Spears version), though whether it is a cover of a cover, or of the original is nether here nor there, and is likely a decision that the listener makes. If the sound of pop music is not constant, and that changing technology always provides the means with which to develop new styles and sounds,²³⁵ then the cover song practically gives content over in favour of presentation. It says: the content, at the level of the score, is superseded in

²³³ Stefani, Gwen. “Rich Girl.” Love.Angel.Music.Baby. Interscope, 2004.

²³⁴ Spears, Britney. “I Love Rock ‘n’ Roll.” Britney. Jive, 2001. (CD1. Track 8.)

²³⁵ Cunningham, Mark. Good Vibrations: A History of Record Production. Surrey: Castle Communications 1996. 210.

importance by the presentation of such information. It is then possible to say that, instead of the cover song being in dialogue with history—that it contributes anything to a musical discussion—it is simply in search of content to feed into pop technology and process. If this were not the case, then during the 1950's and 60's when cover songs were much more predominant than they are today, surely all of the versions of the cover would chart equally well. (Redd shows that during the 1950's cover songs were released as a means to “prevent black artists, who recorded on small labels, from entering the large white consumer market by supplying consumers with recordings of white artists singing the rhythm ‘n’ blues of the blacks.”²³⁶) For, if it is the allographic song that the audience prefers, the differences between the instantiations of the song would be unimportant. This is clearly not true, and is given to show pop music's preference for instantiation/presentation, rather than content at the level of the score. Prior to the cover song there is the process of, in a sense, *uncovering* the original song, of removing the autographic ceiling and laying the work open—as data, unencumbered—to be acted upon and then resealed in autography. Stockhausen's notion of relatively determined musical works, with “multi-meaningful order,”²³⁷ and his disinclination toward the fully determined work—the “dead object”²³⁸—form parentheses about the pop music cover: it allows the original recording the possibility of reinterpretation, yet itself is finite, reified, closed. This is unlike the Stockhausen work, which seeks to be “open for all time”.²³⁹ This is done by making works increasingly less determined at the level of the score,

²³⁶ Redd, Lawrence N. "Rock! It's Still Rhythm and Blues." *The Black Perspective in Music* 13.1 (1985): 31-47. 41. See also: Plasketes, George. "Re-Flections on the Cover Age: A Collage of Continuous Coverage in Popular Music." *Popular Music* 28.2 (2005): 137-61. 144-5. And Dowd, Timothy J. "Concentration and Diversity Revisited: Production Logics and the U.S. Mainstream Recording Market, 1940-1990." *Social Forces* 82.4 (2004): 1411-55. 1420.

²³⁷ Stockhausen, Karlheinz. *Stockhausen on Music*. Ed. Robin Maconie. London: Marion Boyars, 2000. 29.

²³⁸ Ibid. 28.

²³⁹ Ibid. 29.

and at the level of the audible (timbre) so that the work, here, is constituted as relationships, where the relating components themselves are not set.

Perhaps ‘cover’ is not entirely the correct word. Unless, that is, it is understood etymologically, whereby a something is concealed, put beneath a layer of something else, hidden either partially or fully. Or, taken as a subject to be understood through the exploration of its most important aspects, of its data peaks. Then what ‘covers’ the original is the present tenor of musical device and autographic rendering, and that which is to be understood/explored or acted upon—what defines the original—is an order of notes and words. Not their instantiation. But the pop cover is not a re-recording of an existing recording of a song. If we accept that pop music is autographic, then it is more accurate to say that the cover is a *recoding* of an existing recording of some song, and that the cover is coded in the language (device/effects/timbre/even notation) of the present, set down as a recording. Kania, in drawing parallels between rock music covers and films that gets remade, remarks that it is the narrative of the original film and not the script that the remake is referring to—we do not focus our critical attention on the script when analysing a film.²⁴⁰

Plasketes notes that “[d]uring the first four months of 2004, there were more than 20 cover songs receiving significant airplay on radio”.²⁴¹ At some point we have to concede that the audience will be aware that such and such a song is a cover. In this case the cover song is a known quantity, and part of the appeal, I would wager, is in hearing how the old is made

²⁴⁰ Kania, Andrew. "Making Tracks: The Ontology of Rock Music." The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 64.4 (2006): 401-14. 408-9.

²⁴¹ Plasketes, George. "Re-Flections on the Cover Age: A Collage of Continuous Coverage in Popular Music." Popular Music 28.2 (2005): 137-61. 140.

new, in hearing the processes applied to the original, to hear how it ‘sounds’ in the present. In part it is known even before it is played, and during the unfolding of the cover there will be times when it explicitly borrows from the original—perhaps the vocals in the chorus, or maybe just a single line, or a melody is foregrounded. In this scenario, listening to the cover song is ‘easier’ than listening to the original, since the element of discovery—of having that ‘first time’—is more closely aligned to a previous experience. It is as though a memory trace is activated and augmented. Levitin has found that we have “both the abstract and the specific information contained in [our musical] memories”²⁴² That is, details like “pitch, rhythms, tempo, and timbre”, as well as “interval size and distance between pitches”.²⁴³ Even the title of the cover song alone has the capacity to invoke the original. The cover is simultaneously in praise of itself²⁴⁴ and the original. “The pop song *is* advertisement”.²⁴⁵ Now, while it is certainly true that young performers rely on cover songs to propel their careers²⁴⁶—“Papa Don’t Preach” was the first single released by Kelly Osbourne²⁴⁷—what is particularly interesting is the way the cover song parallels (what I see as being) one of the primary tenets pop music proper. The literal/textual of the adoption of musical/sonic devices from without pop is heightened here. The content of the song, either in full or in part, and the presentation of the song can be found, in a fashion, in other locations as peak-data, and is why the exact notation of the original need not be mirrored by the cover. A riff, for example,

²⁴² Levitin, Daniel J. *This Is Your Brain on Music*. New York: Plume, 2007. 164-5.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Adorno, Theodor W. "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." *The Culture Industry*. Ed. J. M. Bernstein. London: Routledge, 2007. 29-60. 38.

²⁴⁵ Cordell, Frank. "Gold Pan Alley." *The Faber Book of Pop*. Ed. Hanif Kureishi and Jon Savage. London: Faber and Faber, 1995. 72-7. 77.

²⁴⁶ Plasketes, George. "Re-Flections on the Cover Age: A Collage of Continuous Coverage in Popular Music." *Popular Music* 28.2 (2005): 137-61. 140.

²⁴⁷ Osbourne, Kelly. "Papa Don’t Preach." Epic, 2002.

may suffice. Ramachandran would call this translation “peak shift”.²⁴⁸ In this light we can view the pop music cover as an amalgam of sorts, with the obvious addition of pop’s own shifting patinas, altering the *look* of the surface of such data. Here, originality is not a concern.

What I am attempting to show is that—ignoring content for a moment—the aim of the pop song is in fact to present a song much like the way our map represents that song. It is in no way *simple*, but in the same way that a map is intended to be read with some degree of ease (there is a reason why a street-directory is not made of satellite photos), so too the pop song intends to be able to be read with a similar ease. Here we can say that the way it arranges data is more important than the data itself. This is not to say that the pop song is purely interested in any particular structure, rather, that it is concerned with *structuring*. This is possible to say because we know that pop abandons devices/effects/sounds at such a rate so as to suggest that they are/were just material to be expended to begin with, to be used for the sake of aligning itself with the present. Again, to see this in action one need only listen to any two albums by a single pop group/artist to this in effect: Madonna’s “Hard Candy”²⁴⁹ and “Like A Prayer”²⁵⁰ albums are good examples of this. We have designed our map so that we can see what goes *in to* a pop song, and how it presents that input back to a listener as a coherent whole, as a single object.

Perhaps we can say that, in part, the degree to which a song is a (successful) pop song, is the degree to which it advertises itself, effectively telling the listener what they are

²⁴⁸ Ramachandran, Vilayanur S. “The Artful Brain: Reith Lectures”. 2003. 04/07/2009. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003/lecture3.shtml>>.

²⁴⁹ Madonna. *Hard Candy*. Warner Bros., 2008.

²⁵⁰ Madonna. *Like A Prayer*. Sire, 1989.

listening to. If, as one of pop's primary tenets, it is concerned with the present—a present that will very soon become a past—then it has a very brief window of opportunity in which to deliver itself, to make itself known. To extrapolate: if the song cannot present/deliver/advertise/articulate itself within the space of the present, if this transfer extends to subsequent presents and is overlapped by subsequent pop 'presents', then—in a very crude manner—there is failure of sorts on behalf of the song in question. Thus the hook, the riff, the repetitions in pop music. Perhaps this is why innovation and originality are not primary concerns; a set of rules need to be already in place, somewhat present, for pop to use them, condense and re-present them as their peak-data, not expand on them, and is why we find distinct periods/trends in pop music—a familiarity with certain devices is accrued over time and the successful pop song articulates that familiarity in such a way that it appears new. A great example of this is mobile-phone ring tones that use excerpts of pop songs: in the time between the phone's ringing and the time that the phone is answered, we should be able to identify the song. Eisenberg knew this to be true when he wrote that “[a]ll [popular] music aspires to the condition of the jingle.”²⁵¹

So we should not be asking, Where do we find pop music? but instead, How do particular songs manifest pop music? But to answer this last question we have to know what constitutes a pop song to begin with. We have to be able to say, Such-and-such a thing is indicative of pop music at X particular point in history; where 'thing' is the schematic, not the specific, which we can pry from history and analyse in terms of what it attempts to achieve rather than what it is. This, of course, turns back on itself and speaks to the rapid turnover of content, so that different 'things' are able to achieve the same (or similar) results. What, then, is this result, and how is it brought about? Obviously, the mechanics of the song

²⁵¹ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P., 2005. 215.

and its structuring are the vehicles for engendering the result, and in no small way does this relate to its knowability.

CHAPTER 2.

STOCKHAUSEN'S 'MOMENT.'

“When certain characteristics remain constant for a while—in musical terms, when sounds occupy a particular region, a certain register, or stay within a particular dynamic, or maintain a certain average speed—then a moment is going on: these constant characteristics determine the moment. [...] And when these characteristics all of a sudden change, a new moment begins. If the change is very slowly, the new moment comes into existence while the present moment is still continuing”²⁵²

From this brief excerpt we could extrapolate most of the previous chapter: distance from the song, cache memory listening, the life span of devices in the charts, and the addition of vectors. What I would like to take up here, however, is the Moment as it is articulated within a single song; from a riff or phrase to a whole section (i.e., verse), and attempt to get to the root of its concern.

Within the Moment we find many of the non sound specific terms that I have already mentioned—simultaneity, constancy, augmentation, repetition—each of which contains smaller and more detailed Moments, where our vantage point determines the ‘resolution’, and thus our ability to determine these Moments that are housed within other Moments. The Moment is also bound by set (composed) upper and lower limits; it exists in the space

²⁵² Stockhausen, Karlheinz. Stockhausen on Music. Ed. Robin Maconie. London: Marion Boyars, 2000. 63.

between zero change and maximum change.²⁵³ This corresponds to Eisenberg's mention of the relative emotional stability of popular music, contrasting it with concert music that develops emotionally as it unfolds.²⁵⁴ Stockhausen's Moment implies a stability: by virtue of imposing a floor and ceiling, the Moment is contained, is parenthesised by limits. Now, if we refer back to the map of the song and view it from a distance great enough to accommodate the whole of it, in all likeliness there would appear a kernel of sorts, or a configuration of data that suggests one beneath the modulation/wavering of such data as it moves relative to a 'mean value' over the duration of the song. This kernel may well be a hook, or it may well be a relationship or set of relationships between sound-events, as opposed to the sound-events that are constitutive of such relationships. It is the coherence of the song, and of course, this is true of all popular music for it is what gives the (autographic, in our case) song its identity. If, from this vantage point we can say that the song is itself a Moment, then we should also be able to say that the moment takes place *somewhere*, in *some place*. (Perhaps it takes place within the set/composed limits.) Let us call this place the setting, or location in which the Moment of the song takes place, for the song is one thing and not another; it is *itself*—its status as an autographic work infers this. So, since the pop song is roughly emotionally stable—viewed in light of concert music's emotional development and contortions—we can infer that the Moment of the pop song will be more *narrow* than that of concert music; the dynamic/emotional potential of the pop song must be more condensed than concert music's due to its being more stable. To make this clearer, Stockhausen composed his piece

²⁵³ Stockhausen, Karlheinz. Stockhausen on Music. Ed. Robin Maconie. London: Marion Boyars, 2000. 64.

²⁵⁴ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P, 2005. 153-4.

“Momente” (Composed 1962-4 for soprano, four choirs and thirteen instrumentalists)²⁵⁵ as a work that is ‘relatively determined’; that is, it does not have a determined *setting*, unlike a pop song which is determined once and for all.

Can we then say that pop music is directed to toward the creation of a single, *total* Moment; that a pop song seeks to consolidate *itself* as it unfurls across a timeline, and that this is essentially a bolstering in service of nothing but its own multi-faceted Moment, where the distance between facets is smaller in magnitude and angle than in concert music? If this is true then we can expect that the size of the territory that the pop song occupies—its scope in entirety—sits in direct proportion to its ability to articulate both dynamically and emotionally, said territory. Or, another way: as the emotional/dynamic ground that it covers increases—that is, as more complexities, more facets are introduced—the ability to cover/articulate, to cohere said ground, decreases proportionally. This is why pop music is concerned with ‘the single’ to a greater degree than it is with the album. “Pop is about singles, solitary songs, complete statements. It always has been, always will be.”²⁵⁶

Roughly speaking, an album is nothing more than a collection of material grouped under a title. The suggestion is that the songs contained therein are components in service of the total work.²⁵⁷ The ‘present’ that pop music articulates with its singles is simply not large enough to accommodate an album. The time that it takes to listen to an album in its entirety, and the ensuing sprawl entailed by the magnitude of the ground covered by the ideas that the songs concern themselves with, necessarily precludes the ‘present’ as one of its primary

²⁵⁵ Stockhausen, Karlheinz. Stockhausen on Music. Ed. Robin Maconie. London: Marion Boyars, 2000. 184.

²⁵⁶ Kevin Pierce in Kureishi, Hanif and Jon Savage, ed. The Faber Book of Pop. London: Faber and Faber, 1995. 669.

²⁵⁷ Brown, Lee B. "Phonography, Rock Records, and the Ontology of Recorded Music." The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 58.4 (2000): 361-72. 367.

dealings. This is similar to Reynolds' claim that "[t]he thing with protest songs is that pop's always been about the immediate [...] it hasn't the patience to slog through subcommittees and lobbying and making orderly demands."²⁵⁸

This reasoning leads me to think that the more songs that are issued as singles from an album means that the present can be articulated in a number of different ways. Though, of course, said singles are not released at the same time, which lends itself to the idea that the album spans multiple presents, that it stipulates a time-frame within which the singles articulate specific presents, which, again, occupy their own time-frames. What the pop album does manage to do is package together a collection of songs that describe the artist's output at that particular time, which is entirely different from saying that the album presents an overarching idea that is only apprehended once the songs have been recognised as constituents thereof. It is as though the pop album is a hangover from when the 12" LP was introduced, and rock bands—among countless others—started to tap into the potential entailed by having this extended playing time.

The idea of the pop single as a stand-alone, self sufficient 'object' that is not dependent on other material for the possibility of grasping it wholly—that it is *singular*—relates to the strength of the constructed Moment and to its autography. For, by virtue of constructing and releasing a single—something offered to the public for scrutiny *as a single thing*—the work has an inherent power (or perhaps is granted such a power) that strictly album tracks do not have, based on the decision to release it in this manner. It relates only causally to the output of the artist/group; the single is offered up as something that is not connected to anything else, it is consciously *unconnected*, but is, as a consequence of its being, related to a current

²⁵⁸ Reynolds, Simon. Bring the Noise. London: Faber & Faber, 2007. 79.

musical/sonic discourse. It is an island the size of a song in a temporal ocean of other such islands. In this light we can postulate that the more singles that a pop album has, the more conflicted it is, because the singles are now (as collected by the album) presented in a different context. The single is now forced into a new set of relationships that augment its original status. (Also of note is that not every song on the pop album will receive radio play—this is certainly true of most, if not all popular music.) Then we get to what is colloquially referred to as ‘filler’, which I find to be a somewhat paradoxical idea. Aside from generally being regarded as ‘lesser’ works, ‘filler’ tends to sit midway between the singles and the songs that would otherwise be constitutive of ‘album’ material, in the sense that the album has an overarching concept/theme/idea. It is as though the singles have a weight that skews the possibility of an album in the aforementioned sense, and that ‘filler’ is an attempt to ‘round out’, or function as a mediator, for what would otherwise approach a kind of ‘best of’ scenario, or a collection of hits.

There are obviously going to be exceptions. In recent years the double album, *I am... Sasha Fierce* by Beyoncé²⁵⁹ stands rather at odds with this conception. The first disc of the standard release, “*I am...*”, is made up of ballads, slow songs. The second disc, “*Sasha Fierce*”, contains the up-tempo, electro/RnB works. The music on each disc serves to portray both Beyoncé and her alter ego, Sasha Fierce respectively, where each disc orbits roughly about the aforementioned stylistic/thematic centres. By releasing the album in this way, as two discs, the connection to the side A/side B of vinyl is quite apparent (though we obviously cannot hold a single vinyl record in each hand). But rather than suggesting a single coherent work, *I am... Sasha Fierce* posits two distinct *halves*, distinguished further by the personality

²⁵⁹ Beyoncé. *I Am... Sasha Fierce*. Columbia, 2008.

attributed to them. Each half is itself a whole, not so much as having direction or an arc, rather, an oscillation about a focal point. So ‘filler’, instead of rounding-out, serves to bolster, that is, if one could identify certain songs *as* filler.

So, again, if we use the idea of limits, the pop album will not have the degree of ‘direction’ or of coherence that, say, a paradigm example of rock music has. It would seem then that this is not a concern for pop because of what the time-frame of an album entails. Where Phil Spector saw the 7” single as the province of pop music, and the 12” album as essentially the domain of non-pop music,²⁶⁰ we can see this concern with time. For, with the 12” record (or CD album), one has the *option* of listening to a side in its entirety. The 7” expressly forbids this time. I would like to put forward the hypothesis that—in light of Spector, and Pierce, above—the way that a pop album is listened to, is different from the way that a rock album is listened to. My feeling is that if there are songs on the pop album that do not immediately resonate with the listener, they will be passed over, so that if we were able to see the number of times that each song on the album is listened to, we would see that some are listened to far more than others. Contrast this idea with a paradigm example from rock music, where the magnitude of this difference would—hypothetically—be far less. With rock, and more so with classical music, listeners allow for, and expect, a development over time. Immediacy is not a concern here. Now, if we extrapolate, the single should be forthcoming in its presentation of itself; it should be streamlined and concise so that, for example, when it appears as a mobile-phone ring tone, the section used should be indicative of the whole of the song so that we know without hesitation what song it is. It would be akin to taking a frame from a movie and having the whole of the movie expressed by that frame. I

²⁶⁰ Brown, Mick. Tearing Down the Wall of Sound: The Rise and Fall of Phil Spector. London: Bloomsbury, 2008. 185.

can only conclude that the degree to which a song can be said to be pop music is reduced by leaning toward the album as the desired format for framing the artist/group in question. Increasingly we can see this as being the case with music being made available as digital downloads where the user can select whatever songs they want to download from an album without having to purchase the thing in its entirety, and where, incidentally, we can view the popularity of songs that have been downloaded within the album (through something like the now ubiquitous iTunes store). Comparing Bob Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde* to Britney Spears' *Circus* in this way reveals precisely what I hypothesised, above: Dylan's album gets downloaded in its entirety, whereas Spears' album gets downloaded on a song-by-song basis, where the singles are downloaded disproportionately more than strictly album songs.

The single/s are in effect charged with the task of supporting the album in a load-bearing fashion—they are the centres about which the rest of album is constructed and viewed so that the weight/power of the single lights up the surrounding material on the album; it spills over to influence/support other songs. I say this (either rightly or wrongly, this I am willing to concede) based on a tendency that I exhibit with regard to new pop album releases. Firstly, I say to myself, "What are the singles on the album?" Secondly, I wonder if any of the songs that I haven't yet heard will be of a calibre equal to that of the singles. This is entirely at odds with the way I anticipate, say, the purchase of a Thelonious Monk, or a Fall album that I do not yet own, so the latter is based on my previous enjoyment, and the former is based on my *present*, and *projected* enjoyment, in the hope that what I am yet to hear approaches this level. If the pop album fails to satisfy this requirement, I return to listening to the singles only. Now, while this is certainly my own thought process, and there is no way of empirically showing that this is linked to the listening habits of pop music fans, it at least

shows that I have different expectations for different types of music, and I do not think that it is too long a bow to draw to in some way link this with the above iTunes store/popularity-of-downloads example.

What the above is lacking is the (potential) other side of the coin, so to speak, where we could imagine a scenario where—for want of a better word—the disparity between the strength of the singles and the strictly album tracks is a conscious decision. When the singles are placed in the context of the album, rather than the current pop music discourse, the environment that we find them in is without doubt different. There is an obvious difference between listening to the radio, compared with listening to an album. Could we then say that the intended result of the two scenarios is the same? That in each—radio and album—the single still wants to stand alone, only causally related to its surroundings? When singles are available for digital download, they come *as* single songs; there are no B-sides.

The construction of the sonic Moment is pursued with the goal that there will be no superfluous information contained therein. This we can say because we know that the Moment is composed about limits—be they timbral, notational or spatial—“in a very controlled way”.²⁶¹ Although Stockhausen’s piece, *Momente*, may appear to be a complex/complicated work, beneath the audible surface lies a comparatively simple set of strictures. Here, I would like to posit something that approaches an inversion of this observation and align it with pop music. What we would then have before us would be an object whose architecture is externalised—or, to not be as dramatic—is at least partially visible through its actual surface; it approaches the exoskeletal, so that the surface is

²⁶¹ Stockhausen, Karlheinz. Stockhausen on Music. Ed. Robin Maconie. London: Marion Boyars, 2000. 65.

somewhere between transparent and translucent. Non sound-specific terms are closer to the surface in pop. By extension, the autography of pop music then, cannot be wholly masked, which is to say that its autography is present in and throughout the work. This enables us to say that the (autographic) song is transmitting to the listener *what* it is and *how* it is. It presents the tools that are used to construct its various Moments so that we can now return Momente as a work that—if we are in agreement that it is more complex/complicated than a pop song—manifests a distance between the Moments that are explicitly constitutive of the work, and these Moments as they are represented sonically. The *narrow* that I mention above—with regard to the size of the territory of the total Moment of the pop song—I now apply to this distance. That is, the distance between the external and the internal, and further, I extend the application of this narrowness to relate to the short life span that pop songs are designed to have,²⁶² for the graspability/total knowability of the song depends—in no small part—on the ability of song to present itself unambiguously, as itself, and not some other thing. This reduction in the difference between external and internal facilitates this process and is helped further by the pop song being autographic, by its being permanently what it is.

Now to unpack what I have just hypothesised. First we must be clear in our understanding that Stockhausen's Moment is a compositional tool, which—to précis—is defined as constant characteristics exhibited over a period of time.²⁶³ How we get from this as a compositional tool to a translucent surface in pop music is as follows: since Eisenberg has established a binary relationship between pop and concert music, and given the former the

²⁶² Frith, Simon. The Sociology of Rock. London: Constable, 1978. 12.

²⁶³ Stockhausen, Karlheinz. Stockhausen on Music. Ed. Robin Maconie. London: Marion Boyars, 2000. 63.

value, “stable”,²⁶⁴ we can infer that the other quantity must have an opposite value. It portends to an instability; it fluctuates, or at least has the capacity to do so to a degree that the former is not capable of. (Now, while I am aware that this algebraic working is certainly crude, we must remember that we are dealing here with limits in the mathematical sense, which will often surpass real/observable phenomena.) Stability, now, is our lever with which to pry the Moment open, whereby we bond the two together—thus shifting the original meaning of the Moment—with the aid of constancy, which we should note is integral to the original definition that Stockhausen provides. Now we engage the binary set that Eisenberg gives but in light of this algebra, so that we now have an equation of sorts where on one side we have pop music and stability/Moment, and on the other side we have concert/classical music and instability, change/development. We now say that the pop song is a single Moment as against the multitudes of those of concert/classical music. Let us now call the former simple, and the latter complex. The simplicity, then, of pop music is determined by its ability to render the terms on the left side of the above equation.

This leads to my claim that the internal mechanisms/functioning of the pop song are visible through the sonic surface of such songs. Perhaps a good way to consider this is with regard to the map of the song that we construct for the purpose of analysis so that it presents to the listener both what it is and how it is. In part this is achieved through the narrowness of the total territory that the song stipulates, so that what we are hearing when we listen to a pop song is *the sound of its construction*. It is a temporal architecture. The non sound-specific terms that are beneath the heard surface are thus placed at the level of the surface: the song maps itself for us, presenting without ambiguity (regarding its mechanics) an openness so

²⁶⁴ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P, 2005. 153-4.

that it may be read with ease. Pop music, then, should be overt in its manifestation so that when an action within the song is articulated, that action is as close to the abstract *of* that action as is possible. This expands on Middleton's referring to recorded music as "reified abstraction".²⁶⁵ For example, in "Toy Soldiers" by Britney Spears,²⁶⁶ there are a number of 8-bar pre-chorus sections that feature prominently a pattern of sampled snare-drum hits. This pattern is constructed in such a way that the *pattern construction itself* is clearly observable. This is achieved in part by not allowing the sample of the snare-drum to fully play out before the same snare-drum sample is played/activated again, which gives a slight stuttering quality that allows the construction to actually be heard, where this stuttering is akin to scaffolding. This is a very literal example of what I have just outlined, though it is interesting to note that the basic structure AABA—or variations thereof—are more commonly ascribed to pop music than any other type of music, even though they may manifest said structure/s. By this, I mean that I have not heard anyone make mention of this with regard to say, glitch. This says to me that—if we stay with glitch for this example—the glitch producer borrows, or refers to this structuring, makes use of it. By extension, it is possible to say that pop music *is* (in part) *structuring*, so that we do not ascribe any particular structure, but again, merely the process of *structuring*. Alternatively, we could term it the degree to which the architecture of the song is present/a concern.

The *narrow* that I reference in regard to internal/external distance, size of the Moment and life span of the pop song should now be illuminated. The underlying concept here is that of an all-pervading cathexis, and so of a clarity. The pop song should then exhibit a narrow

²⁶⁵ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 85

²⁶⁶ Spears, Britney. "Toy Soldiers." Blackout. Zomba Recording LLC, 2007. (CD1. Track 9.)

sonic, emotional, and territorial band-width. But more than simply exhibiting these properties, it should do so clear and concise way. There is room here to incorporate Krauss' rendering of the grid, where it is present all at once, forbidding any narrative.²⁶⁷ Similarly, the pop song, by virtue of the clarity of its presentation is present all at once, so that a portion of it is indicative of the whole of it.²⁶⁸ The implication in both scenarios is not that there are superfluous sections, rather that any section will be able to transmit what any other section is capable of. (Certainly there are differences; we need only consider the verses and choruses of pop songs to see this, but the temporality of music means that we have to grant the comparison a degree of flexibility.)

This leads to the exploration of the notion that the pop song takes place inside a setting/territory, but with an attached modulation as temporality necessitates. The single frame that was indicative of the whole of a movie, above, is now holographic. The modulation is viewed not at the level of the note (for we are no longer concerned with notes) but as it relates to the whole thing as it unfurls through time. This is best understood with regard to our map of the song, where we construct a series of three-dimensional objects and view them in rapid succession so that we can see the song 'pulse' and articulate/map a territory. The pop song draws from a sonic/structural palette to construct a setting, which we can describe as being bound by an emotional and dynamic range, and the spatial stipulations that the song sits within, and the way in which said limits are pronounced. Further still, within these limits, the setting is the total sonic *colour* of the song, it is the song's essential

²⁶⁷ Krauss, Rosalind E. The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987. 13.

²⁶⁸ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P, 2005. 153-4

character, its rendering of its precise autography. The modulation is this rendering over time within the *narrow* that I have outlined, above: it is where the song *goes* within its self-defined limits over its duration. “Lose My Breath” by Destiny’s Child²⁶⁹ provides a particularly strong example of the setting/modulation coupling and of the articulation of a narrow scope. What is interesting about this song is its structural dynamics. Rather than setting out with the intention of an overt ABAB, AABA structure or any variation thereof, it seems as though Jerkins (aka DarkChild, the producer) has set about making the song as a series of “A” parts, without the “B”, so that we get “A” and a series of permutation of “A”. The core of the song—what the music seems to stem from—a marching-band style drum pattern, is over the duration, pulled and stretched and has elements added and subtracted at each contortion, lighting up new areas. Now, while there certainly are “B” sections, the magnitude of *difference* between these and the “A” parts is strikingly small. It ends up being a series of permutations of a core unit/idea, so that there is a constant *pitch* to the song, compared with, say “Party in the USA” by Miley Cyrus²⁷⁰ where the magnitude of the difference between sections is far greater. If we refer to our maps, the Destiny’s Child song would appear as the wax and wane—the shading—of a colour in oscillation. The Miley Cyrus song, on the other hand, would appear as (near) discrete coloured blocks in sequence that are built from the same basic information—a common genus—but arranged in different formations. This gives rise to new spatial/timbral/notational/vectoral relationships about which new information is added. This act when first heard is the expansion, through time, of the territory of the song: it now has a larger area within which to operate.

²⁶⁹ Destiny’s Child. “Lose My Breath.” Columbia, 2004. (CD1. Track 10.)

²⁷⁰ Cyrus, Miley. “Party in the USA.” Hollywood, 2009. (CD1. Track 11.)

Retrospectively, with the song over and our map fully formed, we can see the setting of the song; we can see where it has traveled *within itself*, where it has reached. We could now say that there are repetitions within the song *because* there is a small territory, rather than saying that because there are repetitions, there will necessarily be a small territory. This is because—as I have shown earlier—clarity is a concern. In order for pop music to effectively transmit itself to the listener, it must be clear, and concision helps to emphasise this clarity. Making the area that it operates within small is but one aspect that pertains to its clarity, another is that it will reiterate, so as to bolster, fortify, sections of said territory.

What should be apparent now is that the sounds that are constitutive of the song need not have any real-world correlate. That it, as long as appropriate relationships are formed between sounds/notes—so as to serve the whole—they can be wholly synthetic; they need not even bear a resemblance to sounds that we may be familiar with, just that they are able to operate in a similar fashion. For example, the recordings of the voice in *NSYNC's "Pop"²⁷¹ are edited/programmed to serve in place of drum fills at numerous points throughout the song at points where we may normally expect to find drum fills; for example, in the bar/s prior to the onset of a section, be that a verse, chorus or break. It is an equivalent action. It is something that operates in a way similar to some other thing, as with my previous mention of *choir-like*, *drum-like*.

²⁷¹ *NSYNC. "Pop." Celebrity. Jive, 2001. (CD1. Track 7.)

JINGLES.

“All [popular] music aspires to the condition of the jingle.”²⁷²

I quite often refer to this quote, and indeed it is the basis for much of my analysis, yet up to this point I have not made any in depth attempt to get to the root of ‘the jingle’. So far the colloquial understanding has sufficed—whereby at least brevity and catchiness are implicit. But once we begin to scratch away at the surface, the jingle reveals itself to be quite complex, and here I will attempt to unpack both meanings of the word; the brief and catchy radio or television jingle, and the sound ‘jingle’—which is onomatopoeic—that arises from an action: the jingling of keys, for instance.

First the radio jingle. I am going to omit the television jingle because of the inherent visual aspect; we are only concerned with sound here. In crude terms, the jingle alerts the listener to not necessarily a product, but simply calls to attention a something and need not tell us anything specific about that something, just that there is such a something. The jingle then, must be *for something*, so that there can not be a jingle without there being a something. Further, this something can have any number of jingles, and thus any number of ways of calling the listener’s attention to that something. In fact, when it comes to radio station/show jingles they are also referred to as ID’s, as in ‘station ID’s’. Here then, the identity of so many radio stations/shows, is simply the name of that station or show. This certainly brings to mind Adorno’s claim that “[c]ountless hit song texts praise the hit songs themselves,

²⁷² Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P., 2005. 215.

repeating their titles in capital letters.”²⁷³ Obviously the station ID—the station’s name—is coupled with a musical/sonical component, for the name of the station/show/product/something by itself is not a jingle: “[j]ingles are more memorable than the same words spoken.”²⁷⁴ Though when the voice appears in the jingle it is not *imperative* that it sing. Indeed, I would posit that the method of *voicing*, of using the voice to articulate whatever words or phrases are used, is the important point: it is how those words—or indeed letters, as with so many radio stations: WDLP, WFUN, KLIF to name but a few—are said/pronounced/sung, not necessarily the words themselves.²⁷⁵ So that, from the jingle we extract the something that it is in service of. The presentation both includes and supersedes the something; which something is almost literally buried beneath sheer presentation, the informational content of which is relevant only insofar as it can be identified through said extraction. This informational content is in a way given a ‘free-ride’ on the strength of the jingle. Indeed, the same or near indistinguishable music backgrounds are used as the basis for many radio jingles, whereby the difference between jingles is only in the textual information given. This is called the ‘variable logo’, so that when “written correctly, a jingle can accommodate the phrase ‘77-WABC’ as easily as ‘KFWB Channel 98’ over the same three or four bars of background accompaniment.”²⁷⁶

What then makes a jingle a jingle? It is not enough to say that it is a jingle *because* it is brief (we do not yet know if there can be long jingles). I suspect that the length of the jingle

²⁷³ Adorno, Theodor W. "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." The Culture Industry. Ed. J. M. Bernstein. London: Routledge, 2007. 29-60. 38.

²⁷⁴ Ken R. The Jingle Book. n.p: Ken R. LLC, [2006]. 148.

²⁷⁵ A caveat: this is especially true of television advertisements that feature a jingle, the words of the jingle are supplanted by the visual. When describing a Diet Coke commercial, Scott goes so far as to say that “[t]here is no auditory message except the jingle.” Scott, Linda M. "Understanding Jingles and Needledrop: A Rhetorical Approach to Music in Advertising." The Journal of Consumer Research 17.2 (1990): 223-36. 230.

²⁷⁶ Ken R. The Jingle Book. n.p: Ken R. LLC, [2006]. 150.

relates to the amount of textual information that it needs to convey, but again, it need not tell the listener anything about that thing, only that there is such a thing. We should also keep in mind that we are dealing with—predominantly—air-time, and so there is a cost incurred by whomsoever is having their jingle aired: by reducing the length of the jingle, the cost of the air-time is reduced. Likewise when it is the radio station that airs a jingle promoting a show, it cuts into potential advertising income. This line of inquiry while true as regards economics, gets us no closer to finding an answer to our question. I could, for instance, devise a jingle that I use to greet guests at my home, so here, if the jingle is explicitly tied to economics then what I have constructed is not a jingle, but rather some other thing. I would suggest however, that it would be a jingle. Though, what the two share is a linking of text and melody, or the transition from textual information into melodic information, or sonic information. Is, then, this transfer essential to a jingle? Can there be a jingle without there being a vocal melody, though still containing some text, is text essential to the jingle? There is fork in the road now where a visual medium and a strictly auditory medium, separate, at least in part: my hypothesis is that—if we allow that there are indeed televisual jingles—the criteria for each medium is different based on what each affords, so that the textual information of a television jingle, for example, could be visual: clearly radio does not have such a dimension. For the sake of this exploration, again, I will only be focussing radio jingles precisely because of this difference. Should I get to the root of what constitutes a jingle, the transposition to a visual medium should not be a difficult one to make, and is beyond the scope of this project.

If we say that there need not be any textual information in the jingle, could it still meet the criteria that it needs to be *for* something? I would suggest not. It would simply be some musical/sonical composition. For, tones in sequence do not refer to anything outside of

themselves; they may *invoke*, but they do not *refer*. To illustrate: a slogan could be incorporated into a jingle as the textual component so that the jingle is in service of some *for*, of which the slogan is itself in service. The jingle in this instance is not *for* the slogan. We could say then that a jingle is ‘a way of saying’. This ‘saying’ of the textual information is not at all present in that information itself. A transformation of some kind must take place by virtue of this ‘saying’ in this way. The transformation is dictated by the transfer to a different format: from information *as* information, to *intonation* as information, to *saying* as information. This ‘saying’ changes over time, as anyone even remotely familiar with radio will know: stations and their programs update their respective jingles/ID’s as do the companies who advertise on radio. While it may be difficult to prove that jingles are concerned with sounding contemporary, that contemporaneity is a concern, if we look at this problem from the opposite side, we can simply make the claim that jingles get replaced/remade because they are *old*: rather than showing that being current is a concern, we can say that not being current, is not a concern. This, though, is not strictly true, as current ‘oldies’ radio station show. Now, while the textual information and the music/melody used to convey that information may change between jingles, the *for* of the jingle does not.

The *for* of the jingle is something that can be named. It is not a clause or a phrase or a slogan; these however, can be articulated *by* the jingle. Under this reckoning there could well be long jingles since we can not legislate as to the textual content in this regard. Ken R. makes mention of a 26 minute long jingle that was made for a West Virginian power company.²⁷⁷ The thing named—the *for*—is, I suspect, the reason that brevity is included in

²⁷⁷ Ken R. The Second Jingle Book. n.p: Ken R. LLC, 2004. n.pag.

the definition of jingle; that these are nouns, a brevity it near implicit: the smallest amount of textual information that a jingle can contain is this *for*, this noun.

There is a split here between the jingle and the contents of the jingle, as though ‘jingle’ were a quality, a something attached to or laid over some other thing, and in the process augmenting that thing. It is here that we meet with the onomatopoeic definition of the word. We have a situation where we are presented with some sound that in its sounding recalls some other sound, so that when we hear this sound we are alerted to something that we are familiar with—though at a remove—as with *cuckoo*, *sizzle* or *jingle*. If we take *sizzle* as an example of onomatopoeia, we find that sizzle itself—as the vocal rendering of the sound that we associate it with—is only one way of vocally manifesting that sound, though there is little doubt that it does. It is necessarily an approximation, a portrayal, though it exceeds some minimum requirement that we need in order to link the sound with what it intends to manifest. What, then, are we familiar with when we hear a jingle? I would suggest that what we are familiar with is precisely the ‘way of saying’ of the jingle, with its musical/sonical syntaxes and sounds. That is, the vocabulary that the jingle uses, so that the jingles that ‘golden oldies’ stations use, adopt a ‘way of saying’ that would be familiar to its listeners. If the listener is unfamiliar with the vocabulary that the jingle uses—with the mechanics of its make-up—then there is little chance that it will be, or indeed have the appearance of being, familiar. Familiarity, Levitin tells us, “is just another word for a schema.”²⁷⁸

What then is the *condition* of the jingle and how does pop music approach it? It is not conditional that a jingle be catchy, or that it be brief. It *is* conditional that the jingle attempt to

²⁷⁸ Levitin, Daniel J. *This Is Your Brain on Music*. New York: Plume, 2007. 235.

align itself with some existing musical/sonical paradigm. For example, someone from a jingle production company could well present me with something and tell me that it is a jingle, and I could find it neither memorable nor catchy, for the paradigm that this jingle works within is not one that I am familiar with. So it is that to Ken R., today's jingles "seem scattered, unfocussed, jarring and hard to understand", further admitting that he may well be too old for the target demographic.²⁷⁹ Here, Ken R. has nothing with which to reference today's jingles. In a similar way, I could well be presented with a new song by a pop group that I have not previously heard, and because it operates within a paradigm that I am already familiar with, the song appears familiar, at least partially. According to Levitin, the "appreciation that we have for music is intimately related to our ability to learn the underlying structure of the music we like—the equivalent of grammar in spoken or signed languages—and to be able to make predictions about what will come next",²⁸⁰ and that the emotional response we have to music is based on the composer's/musician's artful manipulation of our expectations, based on this having been learned. The "setting up and then manipulating of expectations is the heart of music".²⁸¹

It is also a condition of the jingle that it resolve itself in accordance with the paradigm that it invokes. There is a problem with this however. If the jingle works within, say, paradigm Q, though in its resolving it adopts something that is paradigmatic of W, then there is a departure from Q to W. This departure, surely, is paradigmatic of *some other* music, such that only at the conclusion of the jingle could we know this, i.e., not predict this departure. Though, if not *this* 'some other', then some other, or perhaps another, so that there is a

²⁷⁹ Ken R. The Jingle Book. n.p: Ken R. LLC, [2006]. 148-9.

²⁸⁰ Levitin, Daniel J. This Is Your Brain on Music. New York: Plume, 2007. 111.

²⁸¹ Ibid. 111-2.

regression toward an infinite loop. To negotiate this, we can say that if the jingle appears to work within some known paradigm, then one way that the jingle can assure the listener of this—that it is indeed *this* musical/sonical paradigm that is being invoked—is to conclude in the manner appropriate for that paradigm, lest the listener not be assured as to their knowledge of said paradigm. What is particularly interesting about this is that the jingle positions itself in such a way as to be compliant with a known quality to the degree that it does not challenge the listener. There is a willingness to participate in a paradigm so completely that even before the jingle has finished—based on the listener’s awareness of the paradigm engaged—that the conclusion of the jingle could well be predicted ahead of time, even known. So in a peculiar turn of events, the makers of the jingle in question assume some a priori knowledge on the part of the listener to expressly allow this knowing. It would not be ridiculous to say that the jingle is subservient to the listener, and it is probably *better* because of this. Expectations are set up only to be resolved in a way that does not defy those expectations. The efficacy of the jingle, then, pertains to the listener before it pertains to the paradigm that it works within, and it is to the listener that the jingle, with its coded *for*, is aimed.

THE POP SONG'S IDENTITY.

By what criteria do we identify a pop song? If we accept Gracyk's definition—for rock music—whereby a song is a specific “combination of text, melody, and harmonic support”,²⁸² and that “[a] song is not composed until these elements are stipulated as combined in a manner normative for identifying subsequent instantiations”,²⁸³ then we must have as our subject autographic works: this much we know. ‘Song’ is something of a tenuous ascription, especially as regards techno, where as Reynolds notes regarding Mantronix, there are techno tracks, not songs, that they are “a shifting of forces, torques, pressures, gradients.”²⁸⁴ For the purpose of this section, and for the sake of ease, I am simply going to refer to pop music in terms of songs, and not works or any other term.

Elsewhere I make reference to a song's being accessed by particular technology, be that the record-player-amplifier-speaker chain, or something else. But what if, for example, someone were to play a song for me and then ask me what song is being played? With what criteria do I base my claim that I am listening to, say, “Bad Romance”, by Lady Gaga?²⁸⁵ Further, what if, for instance, the song is relayed through an improperly set up Hi-Fi system so that the song clips or distorts throughout its playing, or is played in a large hall so that I hear the song amongst reflected and delayed sound, or perhaps so quietly that it is only just audible above the ambient sound of the room? At some point prior to this playing, I will have had to have had the title of the song told to me; I will have to refer to some memory of some

²⁸² Gracyk, Theodore. *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 47.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Reynolds, Simon. *Bring the Noise*. London: Faber & Faber, 2007. 38.

²⁸⁵ Lady Gaga. “Bad Romance.” *The Fame Monster*. Interscope, 2009.

prior playing of the song, and perhaps I will say that what I hear in any of the aforementioned scenarios is in some way familiar to me; that it bears a resemblance to something that I have previously heard. Perhaps I need only hear the opening bars of the song in order to identify it, or even some section chosen at random by my partner. Being able to identify the song correctly, I contend, relates to the efficacy of the Moment, which, after Eisenberg, should exhibit some stability or constancy that affords this identification.

Since we are at a remove from the playback medium—that whatever information is stored there must necessarily be *mediated* before we can hear it—it is not *strictly* to sound that we refer to in order to identify a song, but rather to vectors and the map that we construct in each listening. This accounts for different listening situations, and different *soundings* of the song, for these vectoral relationships will not change to the degree that the sound will, for they are *covered* by the sound. For the pop song, I would proffer that there be some focal point (or region): a point about which the song orbits or oscillates so that throughout the song, this point—perhaps never arrived at for it may well be a fluctuation in some timbral/spatial relationship—is *suggested* by the song. We could call this the *sense* of the song, some overall, underlying character or quality (any section, either in part or in full, then, is indicative of the whole). Certainly this reasoning pertains only to autographic works, so that in the case of Jimi Hendrix playing “The Star Spangled Banner” the criteria for identifying it as such are completely different. In the case of listening to “Bad Romance” I can say that there is some variety of Wittgenstein’s family resemblance at play, only here it is with regard to the many hearings—full or partial—of one thing, so that “common features

drop out, and others appear”,²⁸⁶ low frequency information for example, or perhaps as I am listening I get distracted and direct my attention elsewhere, then back to the song, so that entire sections of the song drop out. Here, my contention is that my different *hearings* of the song each resemble one another in such a way that precludes their being called some other song; that there is a family resemblance across these *hearings* of the same song. But the question is not yet sufficiently answered: By what *criteria* do I base this linkage?

The identity of the song must be given in relation to its various soundings and hearings (for I can neither hear nor see any song on any medium) and is so identifiable by its not being some other song. Here, allography and autography meet, and Gracyk makes the crucial claim that even though (rock) recordings are autographic, they can well be borne from allographic songs, and that the song that we can purchase *is that* song if causally derived from some sanctioned master-tape—containing all of the affects of the recording process—rather than it being defined by notational fidelity (the transposition to pop music should be clear and obvious here).²⁸⁷ Simply, the “history of production rather than notational determinism is the key to individuating the work.”²⁸⁸ This may only be a partial answer, for there need not be any *sounding* up to this point. Gracyk goes on to say that “precise details of timbre and articulation”²⁸⁹ as regards autographic works are essential properties of those works. But how does one *hear* this precision? In short, that precision can never be heard, only an analog of it as the different listening scenarios suggested above show. However, we can navigate around this paradox by saying that the identity of the pop song is given *in and by its presentation*. Is

²⁸⁶ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 31-2.

²⁸⁷ Gracyk, Theodore. *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 32.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

the criteria given by the song, since in order for us to know it, it must give itself to us in such a way as to make itself known as *not some other song*, in accordance with its built-in brief life span? Should the song then—to extrapolate from the discussion of the Moment—present itself as—or with—the schematic of itself, as its own peak-data, as that by which we would describe it, simultaneously with the heard? So that, regardless of the way in which the song is relayed to the listener, what it is, is clear. This of course relates back to the Motown Records technique of making sure that a song sounds “outstanding” through speakers that the projected audience would listen to it through.²⁹⁰

How it is possible, then, for me to whistle “Bad Romance”²⁹¹ and for someone else to know that I am indeed whistling “Bad Romance”? Gracyk has already shown that the song can only be *recalled* when played with/accessed by the appropriate machines/equipment,²⁹² so that when I whistle the song, I do so from a memory that *pertains* to the song. The song is not recalled per se, but rather, some information that exceeds some minimum requirement for it to be recognised as that song, is accessed. If this is true, then we could also say that when we listen to music, we schematise it, which is just another way of saying that we are able to remember music. We have a scale now that relates directly back to our map: in order for us to hear music it must first be accessed by the appropriate equipment—we now have sound; that sound must then be registered by the listener, and in order for it to ‘make sense’ the listener must construct a map—schematise it—from what is offered as sound: music stored; music time-engaged; listener engaged with this engagement. So my whistling “Bad Romance” pertains to my having constructed some map from my engagement with some hearing of the

²⁹⁰ Cunningham, Mark. Good Vibrations: A History of Record Production. Surrey: Castle Communications 1996. 63.

²⁹¹ Lady Gaga. “Bad Romance.” The Fame Monster. Interscope, 2009.

²⁹² Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P., 1996. 61.

song, and it is unlikely that, were it the case that my only hearing of the song was in say, a situation where the song was played through an improperly tuned radio, that I would, when whistling it, include properties that were of the radio's tuning. So, regardless of the original listening scenario, I attempt to whistle as closely as possible that which I cannot—strictly speaking—hear. That being the song as it is stored in the medium. So where Wittgenstein says that “a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said”,²⁹³ can we say that our whistling is that something that could be said? For, certainly we can trace a path that runs from our schematic—that enables our whistling—to the sound that the speakers produce, to the equipment that accesses the song, back to the stored song; we ‘say’ *about* that stored something, do we not? For, if there were not that something stored, then there could be nothing about which that saying could be about. Contrariwise, is it the schematic that the whistling is *about*? In the case of allographic works, where for example I hear two different arrangements of a work by Bach, say, it is that *hearing* that my subsequent whistling is about, and not the score. One cannot whistle what are essentially marks on a page (except of course in the case of a skilled musician who may be able to read a score and whistle it; though this is fraught with complications, too, for example, in the case of a multi-part section) nor can one whistle a CD, or an MP3. But it is in deference *to* the CD that I whistle, as it is in deference *to the performance* of the Bach arrangement that I whistle: pop music “is conceived *as* a recording and not merely as a performance that happens to be recorded”.²⁹⁴ Surely, then, in the case of the Bach arrangement, can we not say that it is with regard to the score that I whistle, since the score is responsible for the heard sound? The

²⁹³ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Philosophical Investigations. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 102.

²⁹⁴ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 19.

heard sound in this case, is borne from *this* playing of *this* arrangement in *this* place; tempo, instrumentation, phrasing are each susceptible to change. Since no two performances can be the same, and since they are said to instantiate the same work, it is unlikely that one would whistle a specific performance of that work, rather than another. There is some mean value that these performances work about, and after a certain distance from this value, we will have trouble labeling the work. It is my contention that it is this mean value that we would whistle, here. What autography enables, is a certain limiting of this variation, and the pop song goes so far as to further limit the possibility of having its identity mistaken by deliberately operating in a narrow emotional/sonic band-width, as per the section on the Moment.

The point that I am pushing toward is this: since we can only have approximations, memories, and simulations of the pop song, its identity will be cloaked in a permanent shimmering vagueness. We can *approach* it, certainly, but we cannot in any way that is not an abstraction, know its identity. Even stipulating criteria or determining such a thing is problematic, and perhaps the label on the disc or the file name is as close as we may come, knowing full well that any playing of such thing will only be an approximation (Hence the map; the need to at least attempt to tackle this problem). And yet I *know* that it is “Bad Romance” that plays from a car at the traffic lights. If, when I talk to the driver and ask: ‘Was that “Bad Romance” you were just playing?’ and the driver replies: ‘No, it was something else’—what does that matter? The song is not just the name of the song, surely. Again, neither is the song its notes or its structure. Nor is it (or could it be) timbre and presentation. We can refer to lyrics but again, this may only yield the title. The identity of the pop song is given in time, in *fragments*; it is given through its various listenings. It is in a peculiar way

analogous with the process of identifying the killer in a murder mystery: if it cannot be X because of Y, then it must be Q, and so on. The evidence must be worked through, and so must be present in the thing, in the case. The point being precisely that—given the evidence—the identity of the pop song, its defining characteristics, should be present at the *surface* of the song itself. Its brief life span suggests this, at least. I suspect that for pop music, the least amount of information that could be said to define a song—in whatever form that information may take—is the working definition of identity. So that in whatever situation the song is heard, its identity should be able to be grasped instantly: from a single frame. Rather than having to *ingest* and then *digest* the song, and in a strange way *think* the song, merely by virtue of its sounding should its identity be given, as though it need not ‘enter’ the listener, as though in its traveling from the speakers to our ears, in the air in front of us and at a distance, it can be known.

CHAPTER 3.

NOTES ON TRANSPARENCY, DEPTH, AND SURFACE, AS REGARDS SOUND.

Elsewhere I make mention of ‘transparency’ and ‘surface’ with little or no qualification, relying instead on a superficial understanding of these terms to help explicate some other point. This section is an attempt to qualify these and their related terms as regards recorded music. The ascription of said terms, while initially appealing and made with no qualms apropos their application to sound, under closer scrutiny raises many questions.

1. In order for there to be transparency, there must first be some surface, and thus a depth (excepting the case where that something is infinitely thin), for there cannot be transparency without there first being a something. But, air is transparent, and we do not normally attribute surface and depth *to* air, though it certainly is transparent because I can see that which is in front of me, in the same way that I can see the chair behind the pane of glass. In the case where I see the chair, I also see some property of glass; were it not for the fact that glass exhibits this property, I would not be able to see the chair. So it is that I also see some property of air when I see any object, although this *seeing* is not an apparent one. It is an invisible seeing.

2. Do we say that, only under certain conditions something is transparent? For something to be transparent—as regards objects—light must be able to pass through it; there has to be some transparency-affording scenario. What then, is the equivalent of light regarding pop music? What is it that passes through what? Now, rather than continuing, and asking, What, then, is revealed by a thing’s being transparent, as with the chair behind the

glass, we can say that certain properties of the song are revealed, as with air, glass, even things like government, and motives. We certainly say that someone's motivations can be transparent, meaning that through some particular conveyance or act, that person's real intent is clearly evident/apparent. The mechanics, the functioning of the transparent something is visible.

3. Some thing is 'opened up' by its being transparent; we are granted access to the interior of the thing—and beyond the thing, should there be anything beyond. Transparency, then, is the ability to show beyond—through—the surface, thus articulating the thing's depth and disallowing conjecture—at least in part—as to how that thing is, for it is visible, observable. But in what does this depth consist?

4. The 'stuff' of depth. By virtue of its being parenthesised by surfaces (or some other such delimiter), depth is imbued with certain qualities of that which parenthesises it. It is coloured by the properties of its delimiters. Is this, though, to say that each and any depth has its own quality? If it were otherwise, then we return to depth simply as measurement, and the discussion turns back to one simply of objects, of which the song is not. Though to confuse the issue, the map that we construct, the map that is given by the song, explicitly sets out to render the song as object, but as I have previously shown, this is without any real or actual spatial dimensions. The map can only be thought of, considered.

5. The above, then, seems to show the erroneous ascription of these terms, but nonetheless, there remains the impulse to continue using them. They make some sense, for if we can point to that which is constitutive of the pop song (as autography), are we not, by virtue of this, suggesting some interior/exterior division? Are notes not couched in their instantiation? Or would it be more accurate to say that there is only 'some sound', that there

is no difference between ‘sounding’ and what is ‘sounded’? The latter appears entirely imagined and that we phrase it like this because of how we come to have sound in real-world scenarios, whereby certain actions produce certain sounds. In order for there to be sound (effect/result) some action must take place that causes that sound, and I feel that this influences the way we talk about recorded music. Though what ‘causes’ the sound of the pop song?

6. Where there is transparency, we find depth not as some measurement, but as some explication of the transparent thing; depth seems to *carry* the thing through the course of the thing, through the extension of the thing.

7. (In reference to the map of the song) Consider a flip-book: related images in rapid succession afford a story. Here, now, each page is representative of the smallest ‘instant’ of the song—infinately thin—and on each page is the section of the map that corresponds to that ‘instant’, so that were we to ‘run’ the flip-book we would have an analog of the song, our map. Each page, now, we call a surface, and on that surface, sound, so that any instant, any ‘present moment’ of the song is the surface. Surface, then, is the song’s passage through time, and if we recall my earlier note that we listen ‘facing the music’ we get a better sense of the flip-book analogy—you can almost hear the pages turn; better yet, hear the surfaces approach, enter, then exit our listening; we are in a wash of surfaces when we listen.²⁹⁵

The *resolution* of the song’s flip-book passage through time is what distinguishes pop music: the pop song can be sustained by a frame-rate that would be unfeasible for, say, classical music. Crudely, if I have a picture of a red ball (pop music), and I decrease the resolution—the dots-per-inch, say—I can, at quite a distance from ‘high resolution’, still say

²⁹⁵ See Appendix 1, diagram ‘Surface/Frames.’

that the picture is of a red ball. Take a more complex image, and there is only so much degradation that can be sustained. That is to say, pop music, considered as a signal, can still maintain its essential qualities in the presence of much signal-noise.

8. Surface is—under certain considerations—the superficial/outward appearance, the exterior face. Depth on the other hand is without a ‘face’, without appearance.

9. There is spatial depth, which as I have already shown is something of a fallacy as regards recorded music, and there is emotional depth, which, here, is of no concern. And yet we want to ask: Does sound have depth? It certainly has duration, the equivalent of which would be distance.

10. Sounds then, “*make their mark*”²⁹⁶ on song-time’s various surfaces. Sound is printed onto dimensionless panes, each one infinitely thin and fading outward across the horizontal and the vertical planes. We are in constant contact with these surfaces through listening to music. It would be as though diving into a pool. First, the tips of your fingers contact the surface of the pool and pass into its depth, while the knuckles, now, proceed to contact the surface, then wrists and so on down until you are entirely beneath that two-dimensional, length and breadth surface. All the while your finger-tips contact and pass through different surfaces of the various/continuous instances of depth, *at* various depths, so that they are in contact with surfaces that are different from the surfaces that your wrists, knuckles, toes are in contact with. It is as though there is a three-dimensional object passing through a two-dimensional plane as a staggered cross-section, but here—in sound—the plane, the surface, as we are cognizant of it, engaged with it, is stroboscopically printed upon with sound-images that we gather and carry through the course of the thing at each *contact*, each

²⁹⁶ Frith, Simon. Performing Rites. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996. 100.

surface. We carry the past, all *pasts* up to and through all subsequent presents. Though, paralleling our diving into the pool, our listening body is as long as any song that we listen to. As a consequence of this we can not say ‘where we are’ in the song, since as the above shows we can/will be in different (non)locations simultaneously: depth is fluid, non-static. Depth, then, is the listener’s ability to navigate mentally through and in a landscape that has no real dimensions. The counter on the CD player’s display does not give us our location, it does not relate to the listener’s listening. When the song stops, when there is no ‘next surface’, there can be no sound.

11. If we stipulate that transparency is a property of the surface, then the surface itself must exhibit some degree of consistency, of some uniformity. For instance, where my window is paint-flecked—where the otherwise uniform *glassness* is interrupted—is it is not transparent; there is some obscurant that prevents its transparency. Constancy, then, is paramount, as I have previously shown apropos Stockhausen’s Moment, and Eisenberg’s comment on stability. For pop music, transparency is achieved by constancy, and it is standard practice in pop production—with the aid of production/editing software—to simply digitally copy a section of the song (an entire verse, for example) and then paste that exact information at a desired point. Constancy is easily achievable in this regard, and this occurs on even smaller and smaller scales, so that a riff, recorded as MIDI data (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is copied and pasted the desired amount of times. A kick drum, instead of being *played*, is *positioned*, or, more accurately, is accessed at different points in time, as the specific arrangement of MIDI data stipulates. Whatever timbral/spatial characteristics the riff exhibits can be constant throughout the song, though producers are often want to alter/manipulate these to particular aesthetic/affective ends; the ‘opening up’ and ‘closing off’

of the cut-off filter—typically applied to a riff that is repeating—just prior to the onset of new section, for example.

This, I feel, is as far as we need go in explaining how these terms can be understood as they pertain to sound, and should aid—at least partially—in understanding their ascriptions to pop music, especially since such ascriptions seem both paradoxical and appropriate. Another reason is that the stretch from here to cognitive psychology and/or geographic/topographic metaphors is one that could well be made from this point onward—and I would not question the validity of such an endeavour—but it is not one that I wish to make, though clearly one could venture into that territory if the desire were there.

+ -

WHAT THE POP SONG DOES: CONSTANCY AND ACTIVITY.

The planned obsolescence of the pop song provides us with valuable clues as to the fundamental workings of the field. For a start, if we accept that all pop songs are so to different degrees and in different ways—that is to say that each pop song is a manifestation of pop music in its own unique way—then the issue of a song's being usurped pertains less to a 'wearing out' than of it no longer being contemporary. A pop song that is no longer contemporary may as well not exist, and in a peculiar way they don't; they are no longer relevant in a field where relevance—the amount of 'now'—is part of the currency. Pop music is the constant and articulated 'now' in a whittled-down and refined way so as to be a distillation of its 'now'. There can be no superfluity for there simply is not time. Now, this 'now' may extend across other 'nows' and is perhaps better for it but its moment will

ultimately pass. Once ‘now’ pulls away from the pop song, like a rocket forever overcoming Earth’s gravity, new pop songs, themselves refinements of other and newer ‘nows’ will take its place and so on. (In a sense, the pop song is a one-armed man whose job is to kick field-goals.) Once stripped of the vitality of the then present, heard next to a current pop song, it will sound audibly grey. Of course as listeners we may have a preference for pop music of a particular era, and while certainly there could be little contestation of this, it does little save for showing that pop music bores ever forward, and with little regard for its past listeners.

What this means for an individual pop song—in the inexorable march of pop music all—is essentially that of a limited window of opportunity. Now, instead of this time frame being the arguably abstract and vague present, let us exaggerate here and stipulate that that window of opportunity is the exact length of the particular song, so that within this self-imposed time frame, a number of things should occur. Least of all—perhaps even paramount—is the re-articulation of what has already been stated in such a way as to reinforce and bolster its own claims. It is the adage that to repeat something is to make it true. This is a puzzling truth, however, for it is one that is can neither be proved nor can it be disproved, for there is nothing which is out side of it in the sense that—in light of the ‘single’ being the primary concern for pop music—as the perceived crystallisation of a perceived present, all that is necessary for it to be said to be of that present, is included in it. If we imagine for a moment that this song, Q, was not made, then that present would be crystallised into some other—equally true, though different—truth claim. This is an odd way to think about pop music, but the core of the sentiment here is that there is a strange narcissism to it: as far as the single is concerned, it heralds ‘year zero’; it is a *sheer spike* which by virtue of

its being *the* crystallisation of *the* present, cannot but be heard. (Barthes' Eiffel Tower can be glimpsed here, though in a parallel universe where, surrounding the Eiffel Tower are thousands upon thousands of other Eiffel Towers, but they are all invisible to the pop song, which in its narcissism can only see itself. And perhaps, after Adorno, screams out only its name.) The re-articulation is two-fold. Certainly there is repetition, on large scales and small, and relational repetitions, but there is also a more subtle way in which the pop song manifests this re-articulation, and this is achieved through maintaining its central/sole thesis—via a minimum-modulation constancy—so that any part of the song heard either in full or in part, is symptomatic of the whole of the song. Such that, were I to change radio stations or walk into a shop at, say, the point where the bridge section of the song is playing, there, in *it*, *through it*, I should be able to evidence the central thesis of the song. The *distance* from the section that I am hearing to the central concern of the song is a tangible one. There are no obstacles. The section seems to be borne from the parts that I bring to mind when I think of the song on my own terms because there are characteristics that I recognise as being consistent with such parts. This bridge section is indicative of some other sections, and it will invariably provide clues as to its foundation/generation, be they timbral, lyrical, relational, or notational.

If re-articulation, which here amounts to a re-affirmation, aids the conveyance of the central thesis of the song, and if that can be said to work through repetition of both sound and sound-relationships, then what we are really saying is that the song is not nearly as long as any CD time/counter would indicate. That is, if we agree that the pop song is given in and by its peak data, that it is somehow able to be known *essentially* through only a modicum of engagement—Berry Gordy's making sure that the music from his Motown label sounded

“outstanding on portable radios and in cars”²⁹⁷ provides a clue here—and that since we know that pop songs have built-in short life spans, and if my claim, above, pertaining to sections of the song, either partially or fully heard being symptomatic of the whole of the work, then the picture that is being painted is suggestive of some queer Möbius strip. There is no real start or end: I can ‘come in’ half way through a pop song and hear only a handful of measures and still be able to say, ‘This is such-and-such a song.’ Again, this speaks to the *sheer* aspect of the pop music, of its being *vertical*, transient, not existing for long. Here we can begin to see how obsolescence is built into the song.

This is in keeping with the *narrow* that I have outlined previously, and I use the bridge section as the example here because generally speaking—and aside from possibly the introduction to the song, and in some cases the outro’—it differs in magnitude from the central concern the greatest, but this we can now note as being the manifestation of the furthest reaches of the song’s modulation. In the same way that the sine wave is all and constant modulation, is all compression and rarefaction, it is precisely this modulation that yields its constant tone, which relates back to the discussion of Stockhausen’s Moment which itself is composed about set limits. Further, this relates directly to the previous discussion on transparency.

Pop music today differs in at least one key way from pop music made prior to the widespread use of the sampler with regard to constancy. That difference is the transition from playing instruments to programming instrumental sounds (or indeed, sound that can be used in place of instruments, or to be more precise, sound that operates in such a way). It would

²⁹⁷ Cunningham, Mark. Good Vibrations: A History of Record Production. Surrey: Castle Communications 1996. 63.

appear that the narrow bandwidth that the pop song works within is itself best articulated by reducing its size. Now, I am aware that ‘bandwidth’ and ‘size’ are themselves vague in this conception but what I am suggesting is that—after our map, and in light of Stockhausen’s Moment—there is a streamlining in some regard, a reduction in *some quality*. It is the crystallisation of nuance. That is, as the *tone* of the sine tone is produced by the wave’s constant modulation, what we have in this situation is a *tone equivalent* but without the modulation necessary to bring it about: a mean value without upper or lower limits.

Not only does this allow for an explicit reaffirmation of what has already been stated, but does so to the extent that the minimum-modulation constancy is now more of a relational one than a purely performative one. This is not to say that there is no nuance to today’s pop music, rather—considering the pop record is an “ideal event”²⁹⁸ and thus whatever is contained therein is itself necessarily ideal—that nuance, in whatever domain we register it, is itself ideal. And again, this is particularly interesting when we refer back to the problems/discrepancies inherent in different listening situations, considering that here we are dealing with/conjecturing as to the information that is stored and not heard. It seems that one way in which pop music can make the heard song align more closely with the stored song is to operate in such a fashion, which *itself* suggests that the recognition of what is heard—crudely, ascribing the correct title to the song—is a primary concern. Again, the mobile phone ring-tone is suggestive of this, in that there have been countless times where I have been on public transport only to have—within an instant of some passenger’s phone ringing—another traveler chime in with, “Oh! That’s such-and-such a song”—or something

²⁹⁸ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P, 2005. 89

to that effect. Which is to say, then, that there is implicit in pop music the awareness of the act/process of listening to pop music.

Now, certainly the producers of yesterday would call for re-take after re-take until the desired performance was achieved, but in these performances there would necessarily be performative variation, which when figured back into the song proper, would yield both performance induced fluctuations as well as relational ones between constituents, small as they might be, or indeed as interesting and unique as they may be. Here we are met with *the way* that a chord is struck or *the way* that a drum is hit. On the other hand, today's performative variation is—and it would not be hyperbole to say this—*calculated*: MIDI parameter assignment/value and cut and paste arrangement, for instance. The level of control that producers have over musical/sonical data is unprecedented, to the extent that nuance can be entirely constructed, which in turn makes it less nuance than affectation. This should not be thought of as something negative, but as being in step with notions of refinement, and of a thorough pronouncement of the central concern of the song. This is not to say that this is endemic of all pop music, just that it is an example of one way in which refinement/reduction can be observed. Further, autography could be seen as the first sign of this reduction; it disallows variation of the source, and only—perhaps begrudgingly—allows variation in the actualisation of the source. Additionally, there has been a reduction in the overall dynamic range of the pop song over time via compression and limiting, so that the perceived loudness of the song is near uniform.

The question now should be, Where and how does this reduction stop and for what reason? It should be obvious that there is a point at which this reduction—this distillation,

perceived or otherwise—fails in the case of pop music; repetition or timbre, for example, can be and are sole concerns for other types of music, certainly. We can think of the pop song as being similar in some way to the swing of a strange pendulum. Here, in pop music, the mean value of the pendulum's swing is in part the concern, but with a partial ear to the farthest extension thereof: a peak value is approached, then, after its articulation as the height of the pendulum's arc—as both mean, *and* peak value—is returned to after some sojourn, the period of which is determined by the exposition of its delimiters. That is, after Stockhausen's Moment, the upper and lower limits of the song. For the song cannot have a clear center, without there being clearly defined *edges*; pop music is pragmatic in this regard. It is expansion and contraction about a focal point. This is a reified focal point, the song's autography grants this, and, after the Moment and the life span of the song, we know that there is nothing superfluous. Confusing, here, is that by containing no extraneous information, and by reiterating whatever content there may be—in the sense that content, here, is the confluence of form and content, presentation and what is presented—it is a bolstering that is *sufficient* for its own individual case. One that perhaps seeks to whet the appetite; the aroma of a meal cooking, but without the meal itself. As if the song were its own ghost; as if transience itself was somehow imbedded into the song's own DNA.

We cannot legislate as to the reduction itself, though. The clue here is provided by the difference between structure and *structuring*, and the rapid turn over of devices/sounds. Further, we know that timbre can as well provide clues to identity where notation may not. That is to say, a *frame* from the song, a *still*, if you will—a chance happening upon on the radio—will exhibit all that the song could ever hope to exhibit. Once again it is to Eisenberg

that we defer, at least in part. The *stability* exhibited over time by the pop song is such that, roughly speaking, it is the same thing over its duration. Fundamentally, it wants the listener to know what it is that they are listening to. Now, it is helpful to think of the pop song not as marking out some length and breadth area (for the map that we construct mentally is without such dimensions) but rather as a floating density that fluctuates, and, after the bridge example above—contorts, as temporality necessitates. Here the pop song struggles to overcome its very condition as incorporeality, as invisibility, as a transient transience. We do not even need to defer to Danto's comment that we can break a record but not a song,²⁹⁹ since, when it comes to MP3's there is no corporeal thing to begin with. There can be no breaking in this regard.

It would be naive to say that pop music is simple. It is simple apropos what, exactly? For whom is it simple? And why does this have pejorative connotations? These are questions for sociology and musicology, clearly, but after the above, still appear to be looming. How complicated it must be to construct a passage that brings with it with the abstract of that passage, making what we hear align with what is un-hearable. That is, that which *causes* the sound—the stored information—and by extension what is derived from our non sound specific terms. There is a striving in pop music to a reification. From merely being stable, to being concrete, even though temporality expressly forbids it, which extends farther than Middleton's terming the record or CD, "reified abstraction".³⁰⁰ What comes to mind here is a relationship between the degree to which something could be said to be pop music, which

²⁹⁹ Danto, Arthur C. The Transfiguration of the Commonplace. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996. 33.

³⁰⁰ Middleton, Richard. Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990. 85

here could be expressed as the somewhat intangible reification beyond the means of any medium—the striving toward the status of an *object*—that is inversely proportional to the life span of the music. On the one hand, this would seem to be a cruel irony, but upon inspection makes complete sense. The degree to which a song is a pop song, then, is in part given by its ability to make itself—as close to instantly as possible—completely known. (Well, what about a sine-tone? Surely that is the most obvious and overt sound that there is? To this I would say that the sine-tone speaks nothing of the present musical/sonical landscape.) I think that the answer to this question can be found in what pop music does with reduction itself. Because pop music is *narrow*, it must therefore apply a kind of magnification, an explicit (and sometimes violent) foregrounding to compensate for this. It cries, “This! This!” The pop song makes sure that it is presented in such a way as to—more than not having anything obscured—be hyper-present. The song is all there to be heard on the surface and nowhere else (at this point we could certainly take up with the previous discussion on transparency). Magnification stretches across a number of areas, and by and large is afforded by technology.

One key area where we find magnification is the treatment of the voice. The first place to look is in the whispered phrase, spoken or sung. More than simply being amplified—which as I mentioned earlier was the technique that allowed crooning—the character of the whisper is magnified so as to achieve a whisper that would otherwise not exist. A good example of this can be found in “Gimme More” from Britney Spears’ album *Blackout*.³⁰¹ The vocal delivery itself is almost superseded by the intimacy that the microphone and studio technology afford. In this example, the sound of air being pushed toward the microphone, encasing the voice in a breathy shell, as well as the fracture of back-of-the-throat creaks are at

³⁰¹ Spears, Britney. “Gimme More.” *Blackout*. Zomba Recording LLC, 2007. (CD2. Track 1.)

least as prominent as the actual voice component (that is, of course, if we make the distinction between ‘word sounds’ and ‘body sounds’). Spears’ voice is split into three different elements: throat, air and the sung phrase, as well as being further augmented by studio processes. The liner notes go so far as to include a “vocal production” credit for the song. In today’s musical and technological landscape, sound has really become data. It is data that is malleable³⁰² and able to be magnified.

By emphasising *structuring*, in this being more of a concern than any particular structure, it is itself a magnification in that it permits the scaffolding to be present throughout the song. I say scaffolding here because in light of Nyman, music is “not perpetually ready-made, but perpetually to-be-made”,³⁰³ which is to say it is being built as we listen to it. So how the song is, is magnified and pronounced, so we can infer that there is in fact little room for subtlety and nuance.

Since “[P]op [music] doesn’t come from any particular place”,³⁰⁴ in the sense that, being of and for the present, there is no history attached to any particular song’s genesis—save for causally—the sonic content of the song will necessarily be a magnification of sorts. In being derived from peak-data from outside of pop music and being a refinement thereof—leaving aside any perceived vicissitudes—this information must be amplified so as to fully occupy the area that the structuring delineates, and I would suggest that the particular

³⁰² Tagg, Philip. "From Refrain to Rave: The Decline of Figure and the Rise of Ground." *Popular Music* 13.2 (1994): 209-22. 214.

³⁰³ Michael Nyman, quoted in: Frith, Simon. *Performing Rites*. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996. 153.

³⁰⁴ Frith, Simon, Will Straw and John Street, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Pop & Rock*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001. 95.

appropriations are ‘small’—being generally only peak-data—but they are many. Moreover, after Frith, above, all of the song could be said to be appropriated.

This reasoning does not take into account those pop songs that clearly come after other pop songs; that follow their direction. For example, Christina Aguilera’s “Not Myself Tonight”³⁰⁵ works in a similar vein to much of Lady Gaga’s music, particularly “Telephone”,³⁰⁶ though where there is decided drive to the synthesizers in “Telephone”, this momentum is taken up by the voice in “Not Myself Tonight”. On this point we can say that “Telephone” is indicative of one angle of the present, one view of it, and that the Aguilera song, in using similar devices and sounds—if we could be so reductive in our comparison and say that Aguilera takes the peak-data from Gaga’s song, which could certainly be contested—can be seen as both an attempt to re-phrase that present, and of reducing the ‘value’ of those sounds and devices, wearing them out, or, of trying to tap into a potential in those sounds that was theretofore not apparent.

The sonic content of the pop song is thus a magnification of a refinement, and in doing so is stretched thin, taut. Whether we say that the Aguilera song is a refinement of the stuff of the Lady Gaga song, or of the source material that Lady Gaga used, is of little concern; it is still reductive in its adaptations, it adds little if anything to the sonic discourse that it engages. As a consequence of this, the present—the pop song—can be manifested in a variety of ways, so that where above I make mention of strange truth claims, we can have any number of pop songs at any given time because the refinement is a perceived one. There is a limit to the amount and type of information that the pop song can contain. If there is too much ‘going on’

³⁰⁵ Aguilera, Christina. “Not Myself Tonight.” RCA, 2010. (CD2. Track 2.)

³⁰⁶ Lady Gaga. “Telephone.” The Fame Monster. Interscope, 2009. (CD2. Track 3.)

the central thesis becomes harder to locate, which is counter intuitive for pop music. It cannot be all things at all times in the singular, the song, but viewed as something that is continuous, where the end, if there could be said to be such a thing, is out of our grasp, then perhaps pop music could indeed be all things at all times. Though only ever as ‘peak data’ because it itself is only ever constituted from ‘peak data’ from without, and from which there can only ever be a condensing. That is to say, there can never be anything that is wholly new in pop music. The field is founded on appropriation. However, there is nothing pejorative intended in stating this, rather this is simply a fact of its being. We are not dealing with copies of copies but with bizarre re-workings of perceived points of interest, and the difference is crucial. Pop music is thus fragile, and any investigation into its being economically driven is at this point, and under this thinking, secondary to any notion of what it is fundamentally. The question of whether it is one thing before it is another is void because the concern here, in this investigation, is with sound over time.

+ -

CONSERVATISM, SAFETY, AND THE CONDITION OF THE JINGLE.

Immediate familiarity. Safety. Each pop song, it would seem, strives toward an a priori knowledge of the song itself, where the immediacy and clarity of any section, heard either in passing or in full, is indicative of the whole of the song.

There is a safety to pop music. Ignoring for the moment how a particular pop song sits relative to non pop music of its period, internally, 'safe' seems an apt ascription. Considering that the pop song is its own advertisement, and that the two are indivisible,³⁰⁷ it must be thorough in making sure that in its transmission, *it itself* is effectively transmitted. If the song is the advertisement for the song, then all aspects of the song should speak directly to this purpose. The suggestion here is that the pop song conveys little more than its own precise presentation of sound and structure. The song is not an avenue to some meaning or message. It is not a metaphor. It means only itself and nothing more, and to this end there is no need for the song to be anything other than vertical, sheer. It does not challenge anything, it is non confrontational. This speaks directly to the notion of the pop song's planned obsolescence.

Pop music, I feel, is safe in at least the following regards. Dynamic range, repetition, timbre, structure. Dynamic range relates to emotional stability insofar as the latter is housed in the former, and since we know that pop music is roughly emotionally stable, it must also be somewhat dynamically stable. This is not to say that the quiet/loud dynamic, which covers both emotional and dynamic ranges, is something that pop music cannot sustain, just that it comes at a cost. Without the stability entailed by a near constant dynamic range, the central thesis of the song is less likely to be present throughout the whole of the song, only at privileged moments. Even if the central concern of the song is a relational one, it will necessarily go through a series of transmutations over the course of the dynamic shifts. These 'odds' just aren't good enough for pop music, and if we do say that the song advertises itself, then all of the song should advertise all of the song. One of my contentions is that the pop song is deviation about a focal point or idea; that at some point this is established, then there

³⁰⁷ Cordell, Frank. "Gold Pan Alley." The Faber Book of Pop. Ed. Hanif Kureishi and Jon Savage. London: Faber and Faber, 1995. 72-7. 77.

is a deviation/augmentation and then a return, but all the while with that point or idea in mind, in view. A narrow dynamic range, perceived or otherwise, aids cathexis. Further, something like a dynamic gradient, which when compared to linearly functioning dynamics—operating more or less along the vertical axis—necessarily manifests over some period of time such that the latter here could already be present in full during this time-frame in which only change occurs in the former. Contrast the clearly delineated block-cut structure of Kylie Minogue’s “In My Arms”³⁰⁸ with David Bowie’s dynamic-gradient conscious “Space Oddity”.³⁰⁹

Repetition engenders a familiarity and thus pertains to a safety. If for the moment we consider pop music as some pool of resources/concepts rather than actual songs—of DNA or code that is accessed and actualised by particular songs—then we can infer that the DNA of pop music is repeated in part by any number of songs, albeit in different ways. Jameson’s notion that we “live in constant exposure”³¹⁰ to the pop song, while focussed on the listener and clearly sociologically based, also suggests that—by way of an inversion of this comment—in the attempt to make a pop song, there is the implicit engagement with the pop music discourse; that an ‘in motion’ feed-back loop is engaged and fueled as pop music represents each new present. There is a repeating that is repeated, and safety cannot but be attained in this process so that where one song bolsters and reiterates its core concern, so too does the field by way of this discursive repetition.

Timbre differs slightly from repetition as regards safety, for timbre is introduced to the field firstly as something novel, then as something that is simultaneously explored and thus

³⁰⁸ Minogue, Kylie. “In My Arms.” *X*. Parlophone, 2007. (CD2. Track 4.)

³⁰⁹ Bowie, David. “Space Oddity.” *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars*. RCA, 1972. (CD2. Track 5.)

³¹⁰ Jameson, Fredric. “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture.” *Social Text* 1 (1979): 130-48. 137.

repeated. Further, timbre tends to be constant throughout a song, and so is repeated by way of constancy, so the listener can feel safe in the knowledge that once particular timbres and timbral relationships have been established, they are unlikely to change in ways that may be perceived as rupturing an established order. Key here—as elsewhere—is the idea of establishing an order and proceeding to work within that order, much like the jingle.

The emergence of a particular timbre, or timbre-type in pop music as it relates to a safety is a relationship between individuation, technology, the present, and where that timbre originated. I firmly believe that technology is responsible for timbre in pop music more than anything else; the focus on being ‘of the present’ dictates the adoption of contemporary means of generating and augmenting sound (or using yesterday’s technology to achieve a similar result), so that the palate of sounds that are currently in vogue outside of pop music are the desired one’s for pop music. So that “[o]nce a bandwagon is under way the majors [record labels] are happy to climb aboard—to elbow their way to the front—but they are rarely in the drivers seat.”³¹¹ One thing that I notice time and again is the friction between pop timbre and non pop timbre, where you can clearly hear what pop music is using as a source, but there always appears to be some pop process (and I suspect that this is in the production/mixing domain) applied to it that renders it distinct from its source, as ‘other’; that in its being processed by pop actually enforces a tangible distance between the two, as it no doubt should because the usage is different. To say that pop sterilises timbre is perhaps going a step too far, and I think it is better to simply say that different concerns require different treatments of sound, and for pop music this necessarily deviates from those of the source. As with pop music’s aversion to grain in the voice and the friction that this carries, so too is it

³¹¹ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P., 2005. 19.

averse to the implications of being *of* some non pop lineage; its allegiance is not with some established or developing field—for this entails spans of time and workings out, successes and failures—but with the present's own non locus. Though, this grey area may be where we find 'cross-over' hits, which again are used as source material for subsequent pop songs. Timbrally, pop music is parasitic, and there is a safety to this.

There is a self-containedness that is elicited by the structure of pop songs, as well as a sense of being structurally overt. So we can say that there is safety in two distinct though related ways: what that structure is, and how that structure is manifested. For pop music, I suspect that structure is both construction, and anatomy; *a* building, and *building*. The alignment of the two cannot but pertain to being self-contained. While I am aware of the semantic balancing act that is going on here, we really need only consider the transience that is inherent in pop music, in its brief life span. Simply, a challenging structure—and I am wont to mention David Bowie here—takes time to negotiate and must be grappled with so as to overcome it, solve it, and again there is a real concern with time here. Whether the pop song is structurally secure because of the brief life span, or vice versa, is of little consequence here, rather it is just that the two are related. If the structure of the song is simple it is easily digestible. It poses no obstacle. The building blocks of structure—repetition, verticality, horizontality, simultaneity, gradient, combination, addition, and subtraction—are not clouded here. The magic of this is that these silent materials are rendered audible. If we listen closely enough we can hear them being riveted into place and dressed with sound; the listener is assured of what it is that they are listening to.

Now the discussion turns back to Eisenberg and the condition of the jingle because what I have said about the jingle thus far I have yet to properly apply to pop music, so I shall attempt to do so here, for this comment by Eisenberg is crucial.

If we could say one thing about the jingle, and with confidence, I think that we could say that the jingle is constructed in such a way as to be instantly identifiable, recognisable. Now, because there is a real concern for the jingle—it has a *for* as I have already shown—and because in the arena where we hear the jingle we are likely to hear many other jingles, each jingle has the same task of being ‘more’ than those that surround it. The inverse would be to say that being less readily identifiable than other jingles, regardless of whether the *for* lies in a foreign field, is something that the jingle labours against. That is to say, the design and execution has to be pronounced in such a way—provided the listener is a party to the paradigm engaged—as to be identified as the precise something that its presentation dictates. It has to be uniquely unique, BUT, in a way that, because it is compliant with an already existing paradigm—and ideally, the listener is aware of this—does not defy or out-stretch that paradigm. There is a ceiling to what the jingle can reasonably expect to do, as with the pop song.

At the periphery of the jingle or the pop song, almost encroaching on it, are other jingles and pop songs. The fate that belies each is that they will inevitably be surrounded by other such jingles/songs that have precisely the same concerns. Part of the condition of the jingle is that it engage in this extramusical relating; it is implicit that this will be so, because there will not be a place where we have jingles that sit alone, singularly, without other jingles being present. The task that besets all jingles is one of individuation; since this is endemic of the field, there is a kind of plateau, a leveling off of peaks. The threshold that must be

exceeded in order for individual songs/jingles to ‘stand out’ is raised so high that, depending on the stance that we take here, is exceedingly difficult to surpass, or a non-issue, but under any reckoning becomes almost solely a striving for some strange magnitude. It is as if exceeding the imaginary threshold that grants individuality is the primary concern, and is often pursued in a palpably violent way. What this means is that by having only ‘peaks’ the apparent ‘magnitude’ is brought down across the entire field; it is as though there is no gradient, just a near constant intensity/pitch.

Pop music, when considered as a field, assumes a nebulous ordering about a non-locus. Although different borders in various regards will invariably overlap like so many venn diagrams, and although these overlappings extend beyond pop music, the finitude and verticality of pop songs seems to run at odds with this inevitability; it results in the trade-off between part palimpsest and part novelty, and the latter, here, is generally cosmetic. The causal connection to other musics and other songs, though vital for the pop song’s absorption by the listener, moors it to a period—sonic and chronological—so completely that it cannot ever transcend it, it will always be overtaken. Caught between the desire to be single and singular—an upward drive—and the sinew-like ‘downward’ pull of other songs that are derived from similar means, locks the pop song into a ceilinged area where transience is really the only possible end.

What is perplexing about the notion that the song is the advertisement for the song is that there is an implicit absence of the product/thing that is advertised. It would then be an advertisement for some non-thing, like a film trailer for a film that does not exist. Another way to phrase this would simply be to say that the advertisement is the product, and again we cross paths with the jingle, except that now, the *for* of the jingle, considered from this angle is

the jingle itself. That is to say that, since we are now considering some advertisement that does not align with some external product or thing—is self-contained—it refers to nothing outside of itself; the *for* is removed. A simple analogy is all that is needed to explain this, and it arises from inquiring into the *how* of advertising. Let us say that I am an advertising agency and I wish to make company Q a new client. One way that I might do this is to show Q some advertisement that I made for company Z's product, X. Now, company Q will not be as concerned with X—the *for* of the advertisement for Z's product—as they will be with the way that the *for* is advertised. Q will look at the *way of saying* X. So pop music is not concerned with the *for*—the X—only *the way that there can be* X, to the extent that the *for* is non-existent. Since it is the *condition of* the jingle that pop music aspires to, we can say that it takes what is characteristic of the jingle—what makes it what it is—without looking to extract or concern itself with whatever the jingle may be for.

From the jingle, pop music wants the 'how is does what it does'. The efficacy of the jingle lies in this area. And though it may seem an odd avenue to wander down, we can view it like this: prior to the *for*, there is 'how it is'; it is as though we must sift through the jingle's presentation—its exterior—to get to the (coded) *for*. For pop music, this first port of call is the concern, so that it is interested in the 'look' of the jingle, and anything that is previous to its *for*.

Each pop song, it would seem, is itself a strange manifestation of a *deus ex machina*. Rather than some apparently insurmountable problem being solved by the unexpected introduction of some mysterious solving-agent, here—since the song is 'present', whole at every turn—rather than being introduced, the agent is constant throughout. This, however, is

not tangible, is not identifiable, it is not anything that we can realistically point to. It is only by way of there actually being *this* pop song that we can say so. The issue of the song's transience is doubly admitted by its being constantly resolved; planned obsolescence is fundamental to pop music because the present with which it is concerned is transient. For us to be able to—albeit obtusely—term the pop song a *deus ex machina*, we must be able to identify at least some problem or issue. Here, it is the is the problem of manifesting in but one way, something that—and I think the hyperbole is allowable here—can be said to be able to be represented in an infinite number of ways: the present, the Now: this is a number 1 pop song, and is perhaps what is so exciting about pop music—this seeming quality of having been solved. When I first heard Kylie Minogue's "Can't Get You Out of My Head", for example, it seemed absolutely *correct*. I could not fault it or question it in any regard.

So it is that there should be no mystery to pop music, no grand surprises, and no hardship on the part of the listener. Its content is all appropriated; it can be heard with proper ears in myriad other places to varying degrees. Pop music 'solves' the present by being compliant with it, accepting that any prolonged investigation into it will see it pass by and will thus be redolent of some past. It is analogous to building on a shifting landscape. There is only so much time in which to build on that landscape before it slips away, and in which time the aim is to build the tallest building. It is doubtful that there is time for anything that does not speak directly to construction and magnitude, just like the jingle. Paradoxically, being concerned with the present seems the only real recourse when this is the concern. That is to say, if a brief life span is implicit, then build the tallest building (use only peak data, make it noticeable) and make it symptomatic of the present (appropriate sound and device) so as to attract the most attention possible: make the building visible.

Maupussant was said to eat lunch at the restaurant inside the Eiffel Tower as the only place that the tower itself was not visible, was inside the Tower itself. Since the Tower sits at the centre of a radius that stretches for miles, this was the only recourse to avoid its gaze. Here Jameson's notion that we live in constant exposure to the pop song seems more than apt.³¹² In this regard the pop song is the strive to the condition of *an* Eiffel Tower, in tandem with the strive toward the condition of the jingle, and under my reckoning the strive to the condition of an object as I have mentioned earlier. However, there is something about the pop song that I feel runs counter to Barthes' essay on the Tower. Rather than having its "simple primary shape [conferring] upon it the vocation of an infinite cipher",³¹³ the pop song is modulation about a point, it is a variant of stasis; it is only one thing, and is that one thing deliberately. The difference here is that the Eiffel Tower is more or less permanent, its life span out lasts all of the people who live under its gaze. Where the life span of the pop song is brief, the life span of *pop music* on the other hand is as yet untold. Considered like this, the field—pop music as it is so far continuous—is the cipher in this equation; songs that reach only a low number on the charts could be said to be the rivets in the Tower, whereas higher chart entries could be said to be girders, themselves visible at a greater distance than the former. Autography redoubles this object quality, this sense of being one thing absolutely. That we have thousands of pop songs—each indicative of some or various aspect of pop music—each in some way a cipher for pop music—is paralleled by this quality that Barthes finds in the Tower. That is, where we can have views of the Tower from multiple angles in multiple time periods with varying scenic backdrops as the cityscape changes, and from

³¹² Jameson, Fredric. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." *Social Text* 1 (1979): 130-48.

³¹³ Barthes, Roland. "The Eiffel Tower." *A Barthes Reader* Ed. Susan Sontag. London: Vintage, 1993. 237.

multiple mental vantage points, and from varying distances, so too can we imagine pop music as being indicative of these various vantage points. Following this line of thinking, pop songs become these vantage points. The songs, as per the views of the Tower are found in specific locations. However, each song has a subject that is constant, albeit portrayed differently. The song is a depiction of pop music as the photo is depiction of the Tower. This is where the quality of a cipher becomes evident. Here we come up against parallel cache memory listening once more. That is, at what distance from the Tower can it be said to be simple and primary in shape? Certainly at an arms length from the Tower we would be privy to information untenable at any real distance, we would see and be able to touch the texture of the Tower, and be able to see what the tower sees, as it were. Looking up at it, we would see a different shape than we would at any other distance. So it is that only at a distance from it does the primacy of its shape become apparent. Further, it is the distance that *allows* the identification of its shape. Perhaps it is not so much the Tower that we see at this distance, but rather the shape of the Tower. And as with parallel cache memory listening, we need to be simultaneously close to the subject—so as to glean information that only closeness can yield—and at a distance from it to get information that only distance can yield. Distance begets this Tin-Pan Ally type AABA structure and this can only be problematic.

As regards sound, least of all pop music, there will never be a shortage of simile or metaphor. The language for sound, to say nothing of music, does not yet extend beyond the obvious and the cursory. The transition from the heard to the written is such that only analogy suffices, lest its *soundness* be overlooked (obvious in this domain is the incorporation of a lyrics sheet in an album's liner notes. How there is a correlation between the sung and the written is perplexing, and not a real concern for this project). My intention here has been to

provide what I consider something of a parallaxic understanding of pop music within the parameters that I have outlined. That from these examples and comparisons I have provided, I have—to a point—exhausted at least the first wave of rebuttal by if not explicitly, then implicitly, addressing these potential rebuttals. Pop music, in its seeming constant presence, is like a question that begets something of a family tree of responses and further questions, though is devoid of any tree trunk. And much like the unicorn, “everyone knows what it is supposed to look like, but no one has ever seen it.”³¹⁴ And whether writing about music is like dancing about architecture is neither here nor there. The point of it is that I provide scope to talk about sound regardless of its genesis (musical score or actual sound generation) or meaning, regardless of whether there is anyone listening or not, regardless of whether or not it is perceived as being good music or bad.

³¹⁴ Jones, Gaynor and Jay Rahn. "Definitions of Popular Music: Recycled." Journal of Aesthetic Education 11.4 (1977): 79-92. 79.

CHAPTER 4.

Presented below is an example of the application of the preceding chapters' approach to the analysis of, and encounter with the pop song; Justin Bieber's "Baby" (ft. Ludacris).³¹⁵ Not only as regards particular sounds or events but with the whole of the song: the combination of—and crucially, interaction between—the information that the synchronic (listening *in* time) and diachronic (listening *through* time) listening/memory caches are able to return. It will hopefully have the appearance of thumbing through the frames of the song as though it were a flip-book, one page at a time, pausing to analyse each frame and collate the preceding frames' data up to and including that frame, much like the long exposure photograph of a busy, multi-lane street (Chapter 1: Parallel Cache Memory Listening). It is the figurative physics of the song.

While the song's chart placing varied globally, there still seems to me something quintessentially Pop Music about it. It seems all sheen. One of the particularly striking things about it is Bieber's vocals, which I still find has the quality of *resembling* a vocal track, of having the appearance of being—of sounding like—a vocal track. Bieber's singing *sounds like* singing. This quality alone certainly speaks to many of my previous arguments in that it is expressly telling the listener that they listening to someone singing. The song says: 'This song contains singing. Here is the singing. This is what the singing sounds like.' Bieber collapses the distance between Perry Como and Beyoncé before the song has had a chance to breath, before it has had the chance to really vibrate some air molecules and stretch its legs.

³¹⁵ Bieber, Justin (feat. Ludacris). "Baby." My World 2.0. Island, 2010. (CD2. Track 7.)

Mere seconds is all it takes. These observations do not pertain to the map of the song and is why they are not included in the analysis.

+ -

THEORY IN PRACTICE.

Justin Bieber (feat. Ludacris): "Baby"³¹⁶

The ensuing analysis relies on my being able to—with some degree of accuracy—*decode* a stream of vibrating air molecules and *re-code* that information into some internal map, and from there, transform that map into a coherent series of observations derived from said internal map. Much information gets lost in this process; some simply does not/can not survive the translation/s. So the real analysis is internal; it is, in the first instance, silent and private. Further, there is the question of how to read this analysis, for the reader/listener must construct their own internal map when listening to the song. The value that this analysis has is in expanding the reader/listener's map; in adding to it in such a way as to increase the resolution of that map so that a more complete/detailed map is constructed. For, the autographic work is, as I have previously shown, a map of itself. In this way, the analysis considers the song as deliberate construction, and what follows is a deconstruction and reconstitution thereof.

³¹⁶ Bieber, Justin (feat. Ludacris). "Baby." My World 2.0. Island, 2010.

After the first chord from what seems like a hybrid acoustic guitar/piano is played there is a pause. In this gap there is not yet a defined tempo: there are no other sounds by which to register one. In this gap we hear delayed portions of this combination sound rattle across the stereo field atop reverberation and some subtle harmonic, some tone. The chord is first a statement of emotional tone, and then retroactively, it assists in confirming the beat and the accent of the beat. Beneath this chord is the sound of water gently lapping, though it is almost beneath some threshold of comprehension; as if a subliminal semantic is being fed to us, saying only ‘slow’. This introduction is either in half-time, or the whole song is in this half-time, making it not so much half-time as simply the tempo that the song is in. However, there are clues that suggest that we are in fact working in half time: the quarter note skitter of the delayed chords; the way that the vocal “ooh’s” rise in volume and pitch only to fall to the first of the now defined chord sequence, accenting this as a “one” in a “one-two-three-four”. These vocalisations that transition roughly from ‘ooh’ to ‘ahh’—a formant shift—are quite literally *opening* Bieber’s mouth and throat in sympathy with where the beat is accented by the chords, enforcing their weight. If at this point we believe that this is half-time, then it is a teasing; we are given a ‘false impression’ of some reality, assuming that some ‘truth’ regarding tempo and accent will be given later. And like a stretched elastic band we want to arrive at some resting position; to release the tension that this friction against time is apparently causing.

There is yet another clue as to this introduction’s being in half time and this is found in the placement of the chords within their two bar sequence, and the *gravity* that their instantiation suggests. Broadly, each of the two-bar sequences is organised as first a statement—a chord—then later a point made in reference to that statement—two chords that

complete the phrase. These articulate the emotional position of the first chord like an afterthought, an append that casts the original statement in a new light, which to better understand we have to keep in memory. As in a novel, where the dialogue for a character is written, and only afterwards does the author state the tone that it was delivered in. (There is a clear parallel here with Jameson's notion of the first instance of a repeating thing being retroactively termed repetition by that thing's second instantiation.³¹⁷) The passage itself enforces this notion through its repeating: a stock of information—information that is *of* this passage—is accrued by the attentive listener. One way to consider this is by positioning the song as the source of our memory regarding the song (which it no doubt is) so that the song acts as a constant stimulus for its being remembered, so that repetition allows the time for a change in direction of attention, such that there is opportunity to remember each frame of that repeating unit.

The song is able to articulate the emotional position of this statement chord in part by the gap between the statement and the append, letting the statement—that first chord—ring-out, giving it space and time to be comprehended/digested, for this append seems not to be *of* the next two-bar section: there is a gravity to the statement chord that, in a way, pulls the append back through time to it. Or to put this another way, that there is a 'ghost momentum' to the statement chord that carries it through to the append, which is perhaps a result of this apparent 'gap'. Here is the clue to the 'half-time' question: this information is positioned in such a way as to be redolent of what is symptomatic of contemporary RnB rhythm patterns and accents. This is complicated by the combination of the slightly softened 'attack' of the

³¹⁷ Jameson, Fredric. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." *Social Text* 1 (1979): 130-48. 137.

amplitude envelope—softened further by way of reverb and delay—and the pointed frequency/clarity of the guitar/piano. It then becomes several things all at once. There is a quickness that the notes' location suggests and a slowness that their envelope/shape suggests, which, were we to view this on an even smaller scale we would hear the 'punctuality' of these notes: the quantization is audible, suggesting the staccato of said RnB rhythm programming. This conflict speaks to the elastic-like tension mentioned, above.

We may take issue with the claim that the positions relative to the beat of the guitar/piano calls to mind RnB rhythm patterns and accents, since, in doing so we are no longer talking about sound in-itself; we are referring to a broader musical context, that is, extrinsic relationships. Now, whether we choose to identify this patterning with RnB or not is of little importance considering that, if we were to maintain the sound in-itself position, it is still *this* pattern that we are considering. It is only after we have come to see this pattern that we are then able to align it with RnB. The pattern itself, as the listener becomes acclimatised to it over its repetitions, comes *before* the thought that it has anything to do with RnB. A step further and we could even say that this particular ordering is latent in the 2 bar interval. It is merely for the sake of ease that the linkage to RnB is made, for it is much simpler than providing a description of said 2 bar ordering. The same could be said of this 'half-time' consideration.

Over the course of these eight bars however, these properties shift. It is from the fifth bar onward that the point of this introduction is made clear. Prior to arriving at this point we are still 'learning' about the mechanics of the introduction as the pause and uncertainty after the first chord shows, and at the fifth bar we have concluded two iterations of the two bar

sequence. It seems assumed that the listener is now aware of the mechanics involved in the passage. At the commencement of the fifth bar the chords are markedly clearer and have a weight discernibly ‘more’ than previous chords. When the statement-chord is played we know that, yes, we are here again, in some familiar territory, confident in it as it is in the listener as evidenced by this clarity and weight. It reinforces itself and redoubles the listener’s sense of it. It is confirmation of your having leaned/memorised the previous iterations. Once this agreement between song and listener is arrived at the song can then go about gently manipulating this learned information to a different end: arriving at the next section of the song. The final bar of this 8 bar section is where the song is allowed to elastically snap into a neutral state, where there is no question regarding whether or not the song is in half-time. We hear the addition of extra notes and an augmentation of the frequencies used to instantiate the guitar/piano, where there is also the additional patter of delayed notes crossing over each other, originating from these extra notes, and because of this the beat’s divisions become more apparent. The passage is making its conclusion known to the listener, and when Bieber begins his vocals they do so with regard to their previous position relative to the first beat of the bar. The expectation that is set up is that the introduction will now conclude and that another section will commence. Information, here, has coalesced.

What we want to do here is move beyond the level of observation. There is little to be gained by merely commenting on what is occurring across a timeline; this is essentially restating what the song has already stated: transcribing sounds and sound-action into words. The listener can hear all of this, or, rather, this is all there for the listener to hear. Observation in this vein is akin to telling a reader the letters that make up the words of the story he/she is reading. So here we are talking about what the song exhibits that is not in sound, where sound

is used to transmit this information, at least in theory. The question is, What is it *saying* by using sound in this particular way, and how is that articulated in the work?

I would suggest that these first 8 bars could be thought of and termed ‘potential’, as a ghost of something yet to come. Its location in roughly the upper midrange of the frequency spectrum, and reasonably sparse musical arrangement frames it as ‘potential’; it suggests—by way of its narrowness—a full ‘something’ that this section will allow us to at some later point have access to. We arrive at this observation from what the placement of the guitar/piano suggests: the kick and snare patterns, the weights and accents typical of RnB. It suggests a forthcoming fullness. In the space—and time—about these notes, there is scope for extension downward to TR-808/TR-909-style bass frequencies and low-mid frequency ‘punch’, and there is ample space for the beat to be divided up into snare and hi-hat flurries. Furthermore, the characteristics of the guitar/piano, in their reverb and delay, coupled with the filtered reverberated ‘tails’ of the vocal “ooh’s” and “ahh’s”, is such that, where we can hear this RnB potential, it seems reasonable to think that it will—when/if it arrives—be in sympathy with these qualities that are set up here: spectrally, there is room for much more information. Once an action has occurred, there is no way to go back and alter that event, so as to bring about a different course of events: it is as though the guitar/piano and its affectations limit in some way the possibility of subsequent events. As with the analysis of the jingle, it would be counter intuitive to disengage with the system that it sets up. Actions should run in accord with previous actions; should appear to be *of* previous action.

So, without the drum track being present, we have enough sonic information to ease its arrival, for what has occurred over these first 8 bars has been building toward this, both, as it

appears on the record, and as it appears to the listener. On the one hand, for the listener—at the first listening—the song could go anywhere, but on the other, the recording only goes in one direction: all subsequent events will always occur in the manner that they do occur. It is fixed, and the listener is either receptive to the clues provided, or they are not. In either case the ‘answers’ to the clues will always be given in and by the song. One way to think of the song’s passage through time is by considering it as traveling along some portion of the root structure of a plant: before we hear the first ‘frame’ of the song, all of the root structure is available for the song to potentially travel through. It is near limitless. At the first instance of the song, as it articulates some timbre or rhythm, the options are narrowed, potential avenues are sealed off, and as the song progresses the options are narrowed further. The song describes its own genus and the latter parts of the song should appear to be causally derived from earlier parts of the song, articulating and emphasising its root structure.

Part of what is occurring here is that the song is suggesting future courses of action, a future avenue in the root structure, as the RnB allusions in the guitar/piano placement show, above. We could think of these first 8 bars as a single sound object, stretched over a span of time and showing various faces of the potential inherent in that limited object, while simultaneously giving the coordinates for the drums that appear next (which, if we backtrack, we can hear their future locations with clarity). It is as though the song is asking that the listener wait for *it* to arrive in full, since this is how it has gone about occupying these first 8 bars: as *not yet*. For, one thing to keep in mind—as obvious as it is—is that the song cannot go back and rewrite its own history; it has to build on it in such a way as to show the relevance of the past while making the present necessary, pertinent. Although, there can be

apparent refutations of the past by way of having a present that speaks to a wholly different set of parameters; timbrally, rhythmically, spatially and so on, where the present is not seen as having been engendered by the past.

The next section of the song is most noticeably marked by the transition to the sung phrase—as distinct from sung or musical vowels—and the introduction of the drum pattern. The focus of this section of the analysis is on the drum pattern, introduced at the same time as a crash cymbal hits, signaling a ‘start’ of some kind, something discernibly ‘new’ for the song as the combination of the two nearly stretches the gamut of the spectral range: a whitewash or sorts that does not quite reach to the lowest levels of the frequency spectrum. The single bar drum pattern which, through its staccato components, repetition, programming and its prominence in the mix, speaks—if not to stasis—then against horizontality to a degree. There is a verticality to the instantiation of the drum pattern which is indicated by the component sounds’ concision, which is to say there is little in the way of decay/release: they themselves are brief. Brief, here, is noted relative to the span of time occupied by one beat or measure. The drum pattern is constructed from only two sounds (one that performs a task similar to that of a kick drum, and one that performs a task similar to that of a snare drum) which reiterates the sense of the pattern’s being concise. Now, whether these two sounds are themselves built from several components is not relevant, for as they appear in the work, we are only privy to their singularness. However, the acute listener will observe the difference between the ‘punch’ (approximately situated in the ‘low-mid’ frequency band) and the ‘tone’ of the kick drum that seems to sit somewhere between 60-80hz, where the latter here has a duration which increases and decreases. At this level of attention to detail we can hear that

the kick drums do in fact rise and fall in volume, albeit very subtly. The mean value of the changes in volume across the pattern (which implicitly alters the frequencies exhibited) emphasise the first beat of the bar, getting subtly quieter over its duration—roughly, fading like augmented echoes—so that when the subsequent ‘one’ arrives it is ‘louder’ relative to the previous kick drum sound; it draws our attention to both itself, and its location.

Here, this information can, in a manner of speaking, be put to the back of the listener’s mind once it is learned/remembered so that the listener is able to predict future iterations with some degree of accuracy. It frees up a part of the listening/learning brain. Once acclimatised to its pattern it becomes an odd luxury in terms of direction of attention so that if we term this a constant, it is occurring simultaneously with the changes in the shapes that the voice makes. Though of course we cannot legislate as to either learned information or attention direction. Broadly, at a distance from the song that allows more information to be processed at a lower resolution, we could say that the same pattern marks time in the same way at each playing.

Since the drums and the vocals are—as regards volume and placement in the mix—roughly equal, we can say that each, or the nexus between each is where our ear is being guided. The guitar/piano from previous is—under one reckoning—overshadowed by these elements and now serves to colour them, lending them an air of its qualities, such that there is a correspondence between the envelope of it, and the envelope of the vocals; an overlap of roughly similar shapes. This runs counter to the relationship that it has with the drums, though to reiterate, its position in the mix relative to the drums places more of an emphasis on the latter in this relationship. However, this is augmented by the relationship that it (the guitar/piano) has with the vocals. It should be clear that here I am attempting to maintain two positions simultaneously: the micro and the macro, where the former is an attempt to better

understand the latter, for there really is only the ‘one sound’ (putting aside for the moment the fact that this is a stereo work).

There are clearly other rhythmic and sonic elements to this 16 bar section (divided into two 8 bar halves) and their appearance in the song redoubles the notion that this is a *not yet*. The non-vocal sounds here, as they relate to the length of the passage, speak to the division of the passage into bar, beat and subdivision thereof. While it is perhaps incorrect to say that there is the *sense* that these sounds are *placed* at intervals (where ‘interval’ and ‘precise placement’ are discernible)—since ‘sense’ is of the listener and not the song—there is nonetheless an intersection between the mechanisation of the bar (and its subdivisions) and of the time that the bar occupies which is *beyond* quantisation (as a normalising of some deviation/variation). There is no sense of anything being ‘corrected’ as regards intervals and placement.

As with the introduction, the listener is afforded the opportunity to register that this section is still spectrally and rhythmically open. There are noticeable ‘gaps’. This is not to say that it should be—or that we expect them to be—‘filled’, rather, that we merely notice this open space as a question of sorts, because to listen is also to conjecture as to sound’s forthcoming occupation of time. The close of this section momentarily ‘opens’ further: the drums are taken out, and in their passing take with them the lower reaches of the established frequency spectrum. Whatever momentum/velocity the drums had helped establish now slows, somewhat like a taking your foot off the accelerator in a car, allowing it to coast—there is a hangover of momentum. In doing so, the chorus starts with a greater sense of speed than it would have had the drums remained. That is, the song has effectively increased the *distance* between (apparent) velocities, so that when the chorus does start, it is apparently

faster than the immediately preceding section. This calls to mind the basic equation for the acceleration of some body: a change in velocity over time. Certainly, this is an illusion; no such increase in speed occurs, for by what do we measure speed by as regards sound? This *apparent speed* is heightened by the increase in spectral activity and by the demarcation of smaller increments in the beat, achieved by the addition of 1/16th note hi-hats—or, something that could be said to be analogous to hi-hats.

The voice in the chorus has two distinct ‘settings’. The first is new for the song, and could be said to be *of* the chorus, and the other is the same as (or markedly similar to) the voice from previous sections. The ‘chorus voice’, most noticeably, is ‘wider’. It is (at least) double-tracked, hard left and hard right in the stereo field, creating an open territory, concomitant with the new wide stereo synthesizer chords, themselves two bars each in duration, which because of their position in the mix, could be termed a background. Their length is sympathetic to the sustained notes of the vocals. Length and breadth: distance registered both spectrally and temporally. The chorus is alluding to magnitude by way of the comparative difference with the preceding section. The seventh and eighth bars of the chorus (16 bars, divided into two sections) return to the ‘verse voice’, narrower in (stereo) width, such that when the second half of the chorus starts—returning to the ‘chorus voice’—the sense of magnitude is redoubled by way of this difference. It is heightened further by the octave shifted synthesizer riff that serves to re-state what it had already stated notationally. The ‘octave shiftiness’ of the riff here becomes a separate entity from the riff itself since the listener is (potentially) accustomed to the riff and the way that it was previously conveyed. The ‘octave shiftiness’ literally plays on top of the riff, above it, and the distance between the two is a tangible one. Retroactively, the first instantiation of the riff—the first 8 bars of the

chorus—take on a neutral or originary character, and as it appears in the second half is the sound of difference; it is only partially new. Not only is this ‘octave shiftiness’ present here, but so too is the ‘neutral’ riff, so that the previous 8 bars are collapsed and brought into the latter 8. Further, the riff here is wider as regards the stereo field so that part of the space that the original riff occupied is evident. One could even go so far as to say that there is scope for the listener to feed their memory of the first half into this space; that the song pulls the listener’s memory into it.

From a different perspective we can observe a similar ‘macro activity’ to that of the verse being enacted, where the first half is about acclimatisation and learning, and the second half is a return, presenting the listener with what they have (potentially) learnt, albeit with some change that clearly has its genesis in the first half. And here, in the width and magnitude of the chorus, in the occupation of a (near) full frequency spectrum and stereo field and the articulation of subdivisions of the beat, the song amasses a particular momentum which, when the subsequent section starts, colours it. Even though it is a return to the verse from earlier, its playing is now heard in light of the chorus, whereas previously it was heard in light of the introduction. There is a ‘step-down’ here, rather than a ‘step-up’.

This is as far as we need go in our analysis of the song, for from here until its end it is essentially permutations of these components and the mechanics therein that I have outlined. There are exceptions, however. The guest rap from Ludacris being perhaps the most noticeable. On which—briefly—I would add that part of what makes rap a vital art form is in its ability to compartmentalise beats and bars with syllabic play and emphases, and in doing so changes the way that the musical accompaniment is, if not heard, then at least considered.

One of the aspects of this analysis that requires a brief explanation is the naming of the constituents. In the first instance, this naming, and the reliance on the ability of the reader to correctly align that named thing with what it is linked to, is for the sake of ease. It is done so as to avoid needless over-complication. There are of course caveats here, but they are included for the sake of thoroughness as well as to show what one can observe given the relevant angle of intersection with the work.

Additionally, it should be clear that this analysis relies on the work's being autographic. Were it not, much of what has been said would border on the irrelevant, for the intentionality of autographic works, and the notion that the work is *constructed* rather than performed, should at least be addressed by the approach to the analysis.

Though, the question remains: Where can we evidence pop music in this song? It is pop music because it *beckons*? It does not speak to—or of—anything outside of itself. At all times it speaks of its own precise construction. In doing so it forbids the possibility that there may be anything beyond its make-up. It is a siren song, and tells of nothing save for its own vectors and curvatures and the listener's place in them, in its designed ease, where ease is the ease with which you can know it totally, even from the slightest of intersections with it. And while this last point may seem dependent on the listener, it is in fact in the first place, a property of the song's being built in the manner that it is built. It is a simple image, knowable no matter the distance or resolution. It is self-generating: there is a kernel of information that begets the whole of the song. Forward and back, it is entirely *of itself*. This *itself* is *of* the present that the song was released into.

Perhaps, even further, we could say that it seeks only to be *recognised*, seeks to be *familiar*, for there are time constraints, there are other pop songs being made and released

during its playing. And is why, finally, the analysis of the song stops half way through the song.

CONCLUSIONS.

LIMITATION.

The fundamental limitation to any endeavour that takes sound as its subject will be language. There are only so many adjectives. Even being able to say what notes are played in what order aids little in telling a reader what actually occurs over a time-line. And as I have already shown, it is not the notes per se that are important, but rather their instantiation: how a note is sounded, how a sound *is*. One can certainly describe amplitude and frequency envelopes with some degree of accuracy, as well as postulate as to sound sources and treatments, but we are still bereft of any adequate language for describing sound as it is phenomenally present. Sounds may be analogous to other sounds inasmuch as there is something common, that there is some connecting tissue between the two, but what is offered in this scenario is essentially that of a ‘compare and contrast’. The ‘thing’ that connects the two—while it may be readily apparent to the person listening—is extremely difficult to articulate with language, though the sound proffered for analogy aids in suggesting an answer to the question, What is this sound indicative of? It does not answer the question, What can be said of this sound as it is sound? The difference is subtle.

Further, the problem of transcribing or transposing sounds to words is complicated in no small part due to the fact that all descriptions of sound are taken from memory, from hindsight, and from the way that that sound was listened to, and where the listener’s attention was directed. Pausing a song does not ‘hold’ sound before the listener as pausing a video would hold an image. The present tense of sound is a grey area. Since we cannot describe the

‘sound of sound’, we can instead focus on describing the behaviour of that sound, that is, what it seems to do. For, while pitch and envelope may be useful descriptors, the distance between this describing and the actual sound is far too great, nay insurmountable. The best that one can hope to achieve as the analyst, is to illuminate the angle from which the sound is heard and to make the reader aware of this as but one angle from many, and that none is more accurate than the other. By alluding to a listening perspective, the potential for other and better ‘listenings’ should be apparent. So, rather than describing sound, one should describe how to listen to sound; to show what is possible to hear given the appropriate ‘angle of intersection.’

Crucially, there is no visual information whatsoever for sound. Listening is blind, and for all intents and purposes, sound is *abstract* in that there is no object. There is no thing to view. So that, where I might call a sound ‘the sound of fingers clicking’ I only describe the action that engenders the sound; the sound produced by this action is nowhere in this description. And yet we can visualise sound internally, and can render that in the form of an abstract map.

Aside from the problem of an impoverished language for sound, there is little academic writing that takes pop music as I envisage it as its subject.³¹⁸ Pop music, however, is at times used as a buttress for arguments based on rock music, for example, or it is positioned as something that is antithetical to classical music, as in the case of pop music’s purported

³¹⁸ Certainly, Philip Brophy’s writing on pop music comes to mind. An archive of his essays can be found here: 17/04/2012 <<http://www.philipbrophy.com/projects/rstff/music.html>>

emotional stability.³¹⁹ In these cases—pejorative or not—there is generally something of value that can be extracted by the subject merely being mentioned. On the other hand, where a claim is made to support one type of music, it may be the case that the opposite—or thereabouts—is true of pop music, though crucially it is a question of degree. The opposite may only be partially true, but where one has to be particularly careful is in being able to distinguish claims that are based in those areas that this study rejects, so as not to attach the inverse of a sociological tendency that is applicable to rock, for example, with this project. With this in mind we can say with certainty that pop music is not merely a music of youth—of some age demographic—because clearly youth cannot be parenthesised by age. Additionally, since Frith has stated that pop music comes from no particular place, and marks off no particular taste,³²⁰ the analysis *should* shy away from sociology. In its coming from no particular place, we can view pop music as a collage of sorts. Though, at the limit, pop music strips existing material down to its essential form, removing all traces of context, leaving only the ‘shape’ that shouldered those aspects, and molds them into a new configuration. One example of this shift is in pop music’s use of the distorted guitar. The instances of its use are far too innumerable to mention here, though for pop music its use comes simply in the form of a guitar sound that is distorted. Its use is skewed toward the least amount of information that could be said to render that sound the sound of a distorted guitar. There will be no whaling feedback and no ‘needle in the red’ distortion, it will appear in the song only as something that suggests that there is in fact a distorted guitar in the song. It would be a foolish endeavour to enquire as to whether its use is disingenuous or not; it is nothing more

³¹⁹ Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. New Haven: Yale U.P, 2005. 153-4

³²⁰ Frith, Simon, Will Straw and John Street, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Pop & Rock. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P, 2001. 95.

than material that is readily available for pop music to use, and the location of that material is the present. Innovation in pop music, then, is in the way that new permutations and new accents are arrived at. It becomes a question of, How can some sound be reconfigured? since this question works only at the level of construction, not content. Where collage can create meaning—or the space for there to be such a meaning—through the juxtaposition and selection of materials and their arrangement, pop music is concerned only with these processes. The image that occupies the shape that is cut out is in some ways not as important as the shape that is cut out. This ‘cutting out’ is akin to the use of a template, one that can be placed on any image to yield that same shape. Here, once more, we have the non-sound specific terms that are the basis for all compositions. What occupies that space is there to signal the sound’s being of the present. This is really the only context that is useful for pop music.

+ -

PRESENCE AND OBSOLESCENCE.

What should be apparent here is that one of pop music’s primary concerns is with *presence*. Not only in the sense of it being of the present, but more accurately with being present, being *here*. In this rendering of pop music temporality becomes something for the music to overcome; it is something that both grants the song its very existence and something that has to be acted upon in such a way as to force temporality to yield a type of stasis, one that results in as close to a singular thing as is possible under these conditions: a presence. This is so that there can be no mistaking it, so that the song can be this presence, this one

thing over its duration. As real-time continues, the pop song fights to bring with it significant traces of what has past—through repetition, constancy, similarity—so as to appear more and more familiar in its song-time passage through real-time.

If the song can bring about what amounts roughly to a sense of déjà vu over the course of itself, then there is a strange transfer that takes place: from the music traveling to the listener from the speakers, to the listener being given the impression that the song starts with them, emanates from them, *and then* comes from the speakers. They are given a false sense of control that this immediate assumed knowing allows. *The song gives itself to the listener as the information that signals the song.* It very quickly establishes its own minimal vocabulary and presents permutations/augmentations thereof, and does not deviate from it in the same way that, were the jingle to deviate from what it apparently sets out to do, would not be assuring to the listener. On the mass arts, Alloway provides a clear analogy: “[y]ou can go into the movies at point, leave your seat, eat an ice-cream, and still follow the action on screen pretty well.”³²¹ To put this another way: consider the situation where a song is apparently several discrete, differentiated sections over its duration and that while it is playing I ‘turn away’ from it, only to return to some activity that does not seem to be ‘of’ what I was formerly listening to. We could perhaps say that a separate Moment is occurring, that the song is not primarily concerned with this type of presence, that where it could have been a sustained and singular presence over its duration, it is instead sequential and different presences indicative of several sonic/musical codes. This behaviour steers away from cathexis so that the degree to which this song is a pop song is reduced.

³²¹ Alloway, Lawrence. "The Arts and the Mass Media." Art in Theory 1900-2000. Ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood. 2003: Blackwell, 1958. 715-17. 716.

The planned obsolescence of pop music speaks to a concern with presence in that, in order for the song to exist but for a brief span of time, it has to actively engage/confront the opposite desire and does so by way of a pronounced absence of the possibility of meaning. This is a contentious point, clearly, but how else is a song granted a long life span, and for whom? The individual, a collective? Meaning—like authenticity—is ascribed, not inscribed. One way that we can understand this quandary is to say that the full extent of the meaning of the present is only understood when it becomes a past, when it can be viewed in light of what comes after it, what it affected, and how it affected it. Pop music's engagement with the present only allows meaning that is directly related to this transience, and doing so renders it obsolete, quickly. The pop song is only relevant for a small amount of time because the sounds that it uses are linked to that time and not a prior one, so obsolescence is related to the engagement with the transience of the present. It would be foolish to assume that there are in fact specific musical/sonical devices that are responsible for any life span. What is in fact being said is that pop songs are designed to be replaced, that the audience is less concerned with pop *songs* as it is with pop *music*, with how it works as a whole. The life span of the song is given not by the audience but by the way that pop *music* operates. However, the question of why certain songs enjoy a long life span, a long chart-life, or prolonged radio play, is beyond the scope of this project. So too is the question of the appeal of certain songs because these are not fundamental to what it means to be a pop song. Simply put, these are privileged positions that only a fraction of pop songs ever attain; it is a statistically rarity. Enquiring into this would raise the question, What are the qualitative differences between a high chart position song, and a low one? Further, although songs do change position in the charts, up and down, what is so obvious as to be easily overlooked, is that it is still that same

song no matter its chart position. The value that it assumes relative to its position is wholly external to that song. This is the basis for the delineation between questions that pertain to what is fundamental to pop music and those that do not. It is the division between what is internal and what is external.

+ -

EXAGGERATION, LISTENING.

This project has to exaggerate. In the broad spectrum of popular music, pop music as it is assumed in this project occupies a relatively narrow band. Since we are focussed on the ways in which pop music can be manifested, songs that could be said to be pop songs are so only to a degree. In short, not even a pop song completely satisfies. The initial narrow scope is now narrowed further. At this magnification the differences between pop songs of different eras—as they can be considered independent of other musics—are cosmetic, though while the ‘appearance’ of the pop song is not the primary concern of the project, and although it does play an important role in and of itself, it is instead the nexus between sound and sound action that is the focus—the discussion regarding where the particular sounds of pop music ‘come from’ should illuminate why this is the case. What this means is that the ‘data set’ is relatively small. The upshot of imposing such strict limits is that the data that it parenthesises is—implicitly—‘magnified’. And it should be apparent that this relation to the subject provides an analytical freedom that is sympathetic to the micro and macro ‘listenings’ outlined in the section on parallel cache-memory listening. The exaggeration in this project is in the delimiting, and future projects in this vein could well shift these book-ends farther out,

radially, to allow more information to be placed under a similar microscope. Having said that, it is unclear whether this pointed approach could indeed ever extend out as far as sociology.

Exaggeration itself also relates to the tenets of what it means to be a pop song. For example, each section of the song must be indicative of the whole of the song. This means that there should be a narrow vocabulary, so there is a corresponding small data set between the subject and the analysis. The exaggerated ‘thing’, no matter the circumstance, takes up some space that would otherwise remain if not vacant, then at least free of said thing’s overstatement, which when related to pop music is better considered as a bolstering, as a reaffirmation or consolidation. Pop music has to exaggerate in order for it to at least be noticed; heard over shop squabble, heard clearly from car stereos, recognisable as a phone ring-tone. But most importantly, it exaggerates those aspects that would signal that song *as* that particular song. Having said that, this notion of exaggeration is something that we *deduce* from Eisenberg and stability, Berry Gordy and Motown production, Stockhausen and constancy. Though it is not something that we can easily identify, for how can any sound or any composition be said to be exaggerated? There is also a cross-linkage here with the discussion on magnitude and how that relates to notions of obsolescence. At the root of these points is a concern with time’s passing, and with marking that time before it slips into the past, and once more we are confronted with the machinations of pop music as a whole, which takes on the appearance of something that is self-perpetuating.

If we analyse our subject in a way that is sympathetic to what that subject does/is—on terms that it operates within—then we hopefully get something that is analogous to a musical response to music, which is perhaps the only really valid response, since words cannot be

said to relate to sound in any real way, unless by way of metaphor. That is to say, simply, that before any analysis can commence, we have to really listen, and listen with an accuracy, and overlay those listenings—this is the basis of the analysis. Thus the importance of putting forth a detailed account of listening to music—specifically autographic music, as opposed to live music—because prior to any understanding of music, there *must* be listening—not reading, as is the case with lyric analysis, which according to Reynolds is just so much poor literary criticism or “amateur sociology”.³²² For example, when we listen to somebody talk, we do not merely listen to the words that they are saying, we listen to the intonation, the prosody, the inflection, where emphases are placed either as accents or pauses, and these aspects, beyond the words, provide what is meant by what is said. So, what is fundamental to pop music should be arrived at through listening alone. Perhaps the key to this point is in the difference between listening and hearing, between activity and passivity; it is making listening a conscious act, something that one *does*, rather than something that just happens. The exaggeration just mentioned stems from this listening. The readings that we get from this listening are teased out to an imagined limit that far exceeds what we can reasonably expect a song to do or exhibit—partially as way to confront listening itself. That is to say, in the same way that analysing lyrics instantly overlooks sound, any analysis of sound itself will not be able to incorporate temporality in a meaningful way, and so with that reality in mind there is a freedom that is granted to treat and consider sound in unconventional ways. This way we can postulate as to what some sound sequence is aiming at, rather than simply what it is, and thus we have sentences expressed in the manner ‘such-and-such strives toward’. In a curious twist we then parenthesise the sound with this approach, since the music could be said to be

³²² Reynolds, Simon. Bring the Noise. London: Faber & Faber, 2007. 171.

couched *inside* the listener. It is then as though we are ahead of the sound and behind it, as though carrying it through its course and postulating as to its destination—as regards limits—beyond the sound-structure itself, to its *apparent aim*. (And I keep one of the tenets of calculus in mind at all times: $\text{Lim } x \rightarrow 0$.)

But, is not the *aim* already set down, solidified, by the work's being autographic? How can we say that a song seeks to achieve anything beyond what it is? Rather than assuming a listener's perspective, here, this falls under the rubric of limits. A song's passage through time gives it a direction; its actions and extensions are all related to what has previously been, and to those that are yet to occur. Loosely, since there is a start and an end, then surely we can assume *some* direction, and thus some implication. We ask, What is happening (plot), and what does this happening in this specific way mean (story). We grant motion and direction to things that are static like architecture, painting, industrial design, so ascribing it to recorded music is really no problem at all.

+ -

INDUSTRY.

The pop music industry—the people involved—and pop music—the songs—are separated in this project. To arrive at this severance is simple because we are really asking, What is fundamental to some sound-structure; what are the concerns that that specific sound-structure enacts? Whether a profit is turned is of no concern. If we say that money is a motivator—that it is a key concern for pop music—then we begin to talk about the concerns of the people involved in the making of this music and not the music itself. And there is a

short-circuit here, too: if money is a concern, and pop music is the vehicle for making that money, then before anyone can make money they have to make music. Even if the construction of some pop music personality could be said to be just as—or even more—important than the actual music, then the analysis turns away from music, to industry and economics, and sociology, too. For example, the steel industry, and the steel that is produced by that industry are related only causally by steel, though the properties of steel, the composition of it, the tactility of it, are not to be found anywhere other than in steel itself. Further, the uses for steel are a product of its properties, not so much the industry that surrounds it (this is certainly an oversimplification, but the point should be clear). And so this project takes place in that space where the music can be apprehended before it gets to any listener and after it has arrived at whichever medium it happens to be stored in. While this approach could be criticised for its apparent essentialism, the findings herein certainly lend themselves to being applied to those areas that it explicitly ignores and those that it encroaches on, specifically phonography, which has been the starting point for the project, and mapping and metaphors for geography/topography and cognitive psychology, as well as simply listening. All of which, in a curious way, appear to be addressed in the multifarious sound-structures that exhibit aspects of pop music.

+ -

CONTESTATION.

Once what may initially appear as contestable as regards the approach of this project has been overcome or negotiated, the ensuing arguments and their specific vantage points

should be clear to the reader. That is, once the reader is aware that the project is concerned for the most part with ‘sound over time’, and once the notion that the ontology is both arrived at and exhibited in and by degrees—that songs exhibit only partially aspects of what is fundamental to pop music—is understood, all that remains is for the reader to allow the arguments to unfold within the parameters outlined. One of the first questions that may be asked of this endeavour is, What is presumed to be pop music, what allows the project to begin? To this, the obvious answer is the best: the Pop Charts. Though what is crucial here is the assumption that the charts are not really indicative of popularity, or representative of pop music wholly. The songs in the charts have to be listened to only ‘partially’—so as not to let these songs tell the whole story of pop music, since only aspects of these songs could be said to be pop music—all the while with an ear to music that does not appear in these charts. By not *committing* to the pop charts, by not saying outright that the pop charts alone house pop songs, we can use them as at least a point of reference. The audible ‘picture’ of pop music is known through understanding what it is not, as much as what it is. That is to say, it is clear that there are cosmetic differences between songs that exhibit a high degree of what it means to be a pop song and those that pop songs to a lesser degree, and this lies atop what we can reasonably say—with words—is occurring over a song’s duration, such that the *activity* contained in the song is under scrutiny as much as how that activity *sounds*, for timbre can often be a cover or obscurant. What we can hear in the charts has to be listened to with an ear that is partially focussed on previous years’ charts, as well as the surrounding music of whatever period we are listening to at that time. Like a venn diagram we ask, What are the overlaps, what are the differences? And considering that for example the piano has not changed, only the recording of the piano has changed, we can—partially—eliminate studio

technology from these concerns. Though conversely, there is much to be said about studio technology that does not pertain to either overlaps or differences, but to the relationship between studio technology and what it means to use it in the ways that it gets used, for this is one area where there could be said to be the greatest difference between pop music of different eras in that this technology is essentially a means for presenting some sound. Sound is always present, but that presence is articulated differently at different times. This observation alone provides leverage for the project, and comes not exclusively from observations drawn from the pop charts, but from the relationship between the sounds in the pop charts and the sound of music that does not appear in those charts.

+ -

FUNDAMENTS AND THE ‘MOMENT’.

The question that is at the root of the project, the one that is the basis for all the observations contained herein is, What is fundamental to pop music? We then couple this question with remarks from the likes of Eisenberg, Frith, Gracyk, and Stockhausen, that pertain to pop music so as to narrow the avenue of inquiry; these form parentheses about the investigation in a way that is not too dissimilar from the use of Boolean logic, so that we are able to position what we can deduce from a single song with these remarks in mind. If we take proposition X to be true, then, *what?* More simply: If X, then Q. Helpful here is the idea that what is fundamental to pop music can in fact be heard—by degrees—in pop songs themselves, and not anywhere that is external to this sound-over-time construction. Given the correct approach to listening, the answer to this question can be heard. This, however, raises

another question, and that is, What is it that we are listening *for*? Again, it is sound-activity. If when listening we discount what is specific to a particular song, we are left with a vocabulary that consists entirely of non-specific descriptors, and as a result of this we are, to a certain extent, beneath the song, beneath sound. For example: there is an *addition* of some sound; some sound is *subtracted*; there appears to be a *plateau*, a *level*; such-and-such a *section* can be clearly delineated from other sections; we can observe activity on scales both *vertical* and *horizontal*; X and Y are occurring *simultaneously*; we can consider the song as a *whole*; there is an apparent *gradient* to such-and-such a section; there is *augmentation*; there is *repetition*. From these terms and more, all compositions are constructed, though the question remains, How are these building blocks manifested in a way that is particular to pop music; to what end are they deployed? This of course leads to the discussion of how they are *sounded*, and to the consideration of their deployment by non pop musics. Here, degree and overlap are at their most pronounced. Twin threads then, interweave; sound and the activity of that sound. The task here is to understand the nexus between the two because these have surely been constant for as long as there has been pop music—regardless of the *how* and *what* of their presence—and although it is possible to consider the activity of that sound as being more important than the actual sound since this activity, the drive *to* pop music is constant, it should be borne in mind that the relationship between the two is a symbiotic one, and that the analysis seeks to understand both, equally. This is to say that the sound of pop music is not consistent, but that there is a consistency *to pop music*.

It is not just Stockhausen's conception of the Moment that is of paramount importance to this project, but his overall approach to talking about sound and compositions generally.

His composition “Momente” is made from four distinct aspects. Timbre (K), Duration (D), Melody (M), Indeterminate (I), and permutations thereof: M(d), for instance. In doing so, these aspects of the composition can be scrutinised both individually as well as regards the impact that they have on the whole of the work, so that by making a work that is based on the alchemy of these distinctly different, though related Moments, the ear is directed toward the action and interaction of each. Conceptually it is explicitly mechanically ‘open’.

Stockhausen’s language encourages us to apply, if not the same methodology, then one that is a reflection on it, to listening in general. Specifics are not nearly as important as what drives those specifics; the consideration is almost *before* sound. The approach here acknowledges the difficulty in talking about sound adjectivally. Further, when we understand the Moment, we can observe/hear it at varying distances from the sound that enacts it, and this notion of listening vantage points is crucial for this project. It allows that there can be more than one thing that we can say about any sound, and the more positions that we take relative to that sound, the more we can say about it. This is one of the benefits of this open approach to listening, and while this does allude to the question of the subjectiveness of the listener, there seems to be an almost tacit response to this question given by pop music: its autography. No matter the scenario, the same information is relayed to the listener, though with the obvious changes in sound due to circumstance. But this could be said to be an ‘arithmetic’ difference, and to refer back to “Momente”, there would still be those K, D, I, and M moments. These are where the concerns of this project lie. What should be apparent now, is that we are looking at the Moment from something of an angle. The original meaning of the idea has been augmented, adapted to be used as an analytical tool rather than a compositional one—something that Stockhausen himself does in explaining it, and gives the example of an

auditorium full of people exiting either at a slow rate, or all at the same time. The Moment of his delivering the lecture ends over some period of time described by the audience's leaving, and the subsequent Moment begins in response to this rate of change.³²³

The idea that there is nothing superfluous in the Moment can be aligned with pop music's autography, and thus with whatever sounds and sound relationships are contained in the song, for autography grants that the work is unchanging, absolute. 'Construction' would be an apt way to describe the way that pop music manifests its autography, and as such, the analysis responds to this quality of being 'constructed' more than it does to any notion of performance or musicianship. This means that there are no aspects of the work that do not contribute directly to the work as a whole, and so there is a precision that, for example, we will not find in the live performances of rock songs. One of the things that this linkage of Moment and autography allows is the construction of the mental map of the song, since there could be said to be a stasis of sorts that is engendered by a work's being autographic. Since the work itself is unchanging, it *can* be mapped, every aspect of it is "available for our discrimination and thus for its interpretive potential."³²⁴ The map then becomes a response to the problem of temporality, and in a round about way we can postulate that autography is too, in its constantly being this one thing. Temporality then, is only an issue when our attention is focussed on a small band of the present in the unfolding of the work. Though, as listeners, we in fact decide the size of this present. If we were able to place an even, constant attention to all of the 'presents' of the song, if the size of the present could be extended to the whole of the song, then we would lose nothing to temporality/memory. If we were able to construct a

³²³ Stockhausen, Karlheinz. Stockhausen on Music. Ed. Robin Maconie. London: Marion Boyars, 2000. 64.

³²⁴ Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996. 55.

detailed enough map from this resizing of the present, and if we were able to read that map, we could have every aspect of that song before us, every thing that makes that work what it is: we could *see* the song, or rather, a simulation, a simulacrum of the song. The fundamental nature of pop music is not to be found in the interaction of listener and music, but in the music itself. Too much attention has been paid to the listener. Accordingly, we must shape ourselves into a type of non-listener; we must be impartial and bring nothing of ourselves to the music. The notion of creating a map of the song is further enforced by this vantage point that allows us to term the song a Moment. More than the characteristics of the work being constant by way of the work being autographic, there is also a constancy that is evidenced by both the dynamic, and structural scope of the work.

+ -

JINGLES AND POP SONGS.

One of the key points for this project is the notion that the jingle somehow relates to pop music, and that by having a better understanding of the jingle we can better understand pop music. The relationship between the two is in their respective aims, and these aims are extra-musical. The music/sound is simply a vehicle for this. To be clear, the music/sound of the jingle is the way that the jingle draws the listener in, so that it can transmit its *for*, its advertised thing, so that the aim—this transaction—is facilitated by the specific use of sound-structures that are symptomatic of something that the (desired) listener is familiar with. One way to look at this is by saying that since both pop music and the jingle cease to implement certain devices—sonic, structural—as they fall out of vogue, we can postulate that their value

was only ever in the way that those devices were linked to certain periods of time and to the surrounding music of that time. Again, the radio station ID works in a similar way: the same *for* is used, but the way of making that *for* audible changes in step with the music that surrounds it. The name of the radio station does not change, only the way that that name is ‘said’. When this is transposed back to pop music it yields: ‘the objective is constant, but the way of achieving that objective is not constant’. By itself, this is not particularly revolutionary and nor is it something that pertains to pop music alone, but it immediately allows the split between sound-structures and objectives, and it is to the latter, by way of the former, that the project has been directed. A simple question arises from this split: What is it trying to do? This we can ask more easily of the jingle since it is rarely, if ever, considered as being produced by a group or individual (in the sense of the Pop song), coupled with the knowledge that the jingle is trying alert the listener to something; that it indeed has a task to perform, and that that task is addressed over the course of the jingle. We first have to allow that there is indeed a *for* for pop music—an ‘in service of’. As best I can tell, this *for* is the identity of the song. The design and construction of the song is intended to signal the song itself, to signal its own presence. When taken to the nth degree, all roads, it would seem, lead to ‘presence’. Although we cannot legislate as to how that presence is specifically articulated, we should by now be able to discern when this is a concern for a particular song. There is then a curious brand of futility, or a tragedy, to the pop song. This is not so for pop music, on the other hand.

Where there is an apparent sense of agency granted to the song, it is merely intended as a short-hand. For example, where there appears, ‘Pop music strives toward...’, it is a way of

saying, ‘The people who are responsible for the song, from the engineers, writers, recordists, producers—in whatever capacity that may be—musicians, programmers, editors, appear to be working with such-and-such as a collective objective.’ Though, it is helpful on occasion to imagine the pop song as having a sense of agency, of autonomy. This way, all pop music can be thought of roughly equally, since if we have already negated the listener, why not remove the people on the other side of the music since they are concerned primarily with manifesting what it is for a song to be a pop song. At least, this is my assumption. There is nothing to say that we cannot frame the argument like this, for though it may seem questionable at times—that there is too much distance between the subject and the analysis, that it takes place in some rarefied air—there has to be some validity in doing so. It cannot be invalid so long as there is a commitment to, and a constancy in the position taken; this is simply a different lens with which to view/hear the music.

In another Möbius type loop, a pop song will in fact *become* a jingle. From the *for* being a mobile phone ring-tone, to the *for* being a crime-drama or a pizza, say. Beyond this—as with the jingle—the ‘way of saying’ is designed, is constructed, deliberated over, and could be expressed equally well by some other ‘way of saying’. The pop song can now be considered as its own jingle.

One thing that this project is lacking is an explicit statement of what the tenets of rock music are since rock is used as something to distinguish pop music against. One dichotomy that is readily apparent is that since we are considering pop music as essentially sound over some duration, the lyric content becomes entirely superfluous, contrasted with the allowance that rock lyrics *may* have some meaning. This then suggests that the way that pop

and rock are viewed is different here, that some semblance of a sociological understanding is applied to rock where it is decidedly absent in this understanding of pop. On the analysis of lyrics, Frith argues that it is valid only for certain types of music: country, blues, soul, and the right strands of rock, and that “in the mainstream of mass music something else is going on.”³²⁵ But surely this cannot be the only reason for such a split, and even Frith assumes of pop music that it is—if not completely devoid of meaning, lyrically—*somehow* different. Is this to say that the former musics are in some way folk musics; that they are in some way, for and by some people? To carry on this route is to say that the way that people listen to rock and pop is different, which it no doubt is, but immediately we bring in the listener in a way that affects our understanding of each music. Here, we should recall pop music’s being directed toward the single, and rock music to the album. I liken the potential for meaning in rock lyrics to watching a subtitled foreign film, which in order to get the most out of it—whatever this vague sentiment means—is to in fact watch it at least twice: once to read the text and then once to watch the images, then perhaps a third time to combine these readings. Which in the case of the rock song, is taking the lyrics out of their musical context, considering/reading them, and then reinstating them back into the song, implying that—to a degree—the music is accompaniment for lyrics, which rings true of rap music to a larger degree than I feel it does to rock music. But, could we then say of both rap and rock that they are made of stronger material than pop, that their mettle could sustain such a dismantling? On this point it is paramount to remember pop music’s concern with the present. Simply, the above process of ‘taking in’ the lyrics of rock or rap songs takes place over multiple listenings, over time lines longer than that of the song in question. And while there is nothing

³²⁵ Frith, Simon. *Music for Pleasure : Essays in the Sociology of Pop* / Simon Frith. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989. 108

to say that people can not and do not repeatedly listen to the same pop songs over and over, it is likely that this is not done in an attempt to better understand that particular work. For, the pop song will have ideally transmitted exactly this information already, in and over its duration, in whatever circumstance it happens to be heard. This, certainly, is to take the concern with time/the present to an extreme, but it is at the extreme—beyond what we can reasonably expect to find occurring in reality—that we can evidence this, and this does not invalidate my earlier claims. The lyrics, then, are *necessarily* unimportant; they are merely stuff for the voice to attach to, to provide purchase.

We could forge a link between rock and pop by taking into consideration how rock music relates to the present—if indeed it does—since this is fundamental to pop music. This is to establish, at the very least, some parallel—though clearly different in resolve—understanding. Essentially, this would mean examining each music with the same tools, and then observing where the overlaps lie, since the present would be the common denominator. Could it be, though, that it is possible to arrive at an ontology of pop music without recourse to sociology, but that for rock this is an impossibility? This is not to say that an ontology of pop could not have been arrived at without the aid of sociology, just that there could be a number of ways of doing so.

One of the advantages of working with the concept of limits is that we can say, no matter the starting point or the primary texts, the conclusions, since they are made about limits which themselves prescribe an extrapolation to the *n*th degree, would in theory be the same, or at least markedly similar. The route taken to arrive at this ontology would no doubt have been different. For instance, what should be noticeable in this project is the similarity that some of the claims herein bear with what Adorno has said in his essay, “On the Fetish

Character in Music and the Regression of Listening.” What is dissimilar, however, is that Adorno’s is a polemic based on some perceived value in light of pop music’s status as a commodity, as entertainment, and under the shadows of classical music, and carries the essay though under this high/low split. In many ways it reads like an attack on children’s picture books in light of the works of Joyce or whomever you take as being a bastion of literary greatness. There are no allusions to notions of worth in this project. It has instead been carried out with a view to understanding what makes the subject what it is. Where Adorno places a negative emphasis to some similar claim that is arrived at here, that claim, in itself, is considered as simply a (potential) fact of its being. Certainly the limits of this project forbid similar such conjecture, but further to that, his pejorative claims do not pertain to what is fundamental to the subject; if something could be said to be fundamental to its being, then there should be no assumption as to the worth of that thing, it is simply a property of that thing.

+ -

ONTOLOGY.

There are questions remaining: What is the ontology of pop music? What is its fundamental nature? What are its primary concerns? The answer to these can be given in the most simple of terms: the degree to which a song could be said to be a pop song, is the degree to which it has the appearance of being like an image of something that can be identified from any angle, any distance, and at any resolution. This suggests that the actual image is a simple one. The sound of pop music equates to this image—as opposed to the bringing about

of that image—and accounts for the superficial differences in pop music of different eras. The picture—if the analogy be allowed—here, is situated at what could be considered the centre of some radius, since it is an amalgam of the various pictures that it situates itself relative to, and that it strives to be the equivalent of a sonic concentrate about which these other pictures are located. It must refine and then exaggerate that refinement. There is a peculiar alchemy to this, however. This centre that the song aims for is a centre that the song constructs, and may in fact be located—or be more convincingly articulated—at some distance from where the song arrives, so that another song has the chance to better express that (imagined) centre, thus defining it, and in this regard pop music is parasitic and necessarily lags behind the vanguard. Now, if we do say that the pop song is constructed with a view to becoming an easily identifiable image, then we can say that there is an awareness of the process/act of listening. If we listen for different things in each listening of a song, we will in fact hear different things. The more we listen, the more we hear, and no two ‘listenings’ can ever be the same. While different listening will resemble one another, the pop song wants those repeat listenings to be *returns* rather than an opportunity for discovery. In these returns, whether in the song itself or as repeat listenings, it becomes not so much the actual song that is being listened to, but the aspects of the song that remind you of the song. Part of the task of the pop song is that it simply *present*, that it put before the listener what it is, and that ‘what it is’ aspect is the information that you need in order to recognise the song. Once more there is the temptation to say that pop songs are not songs *per se*, but rather, sound information that alerts the listener to the fact that there is such sound information. The pop song is there to signal its existence at each instance of the song, so that when we listen to

the pop song, we only listen to this signaling. For the pop song to do this it must be narrow in scope in every regard.

There is also an awareness on the part of pop music of the pace, or the landscape that it seeks to be a part of which reinforces the notion that it seeks to manifest the qualities of a simple image: a billboard by the road-side, a slogan in sound-shapes, a catch-phrase. We can now see that under this reckoning pop songs are indeed designed to have short life spans because the environment in which they exist changes so rapidly, or rather, that by constituting the song in such a manner, a brief life span is implicit. Longevity—however this is regarded—would signal the past that the song was born into, and would confer upon it an age. It is not fundamental to the pop song that it have a long life span, even though plenty of pop songs do. This begs the question, Why the concern with the present, the now? Perhaps it is because of the constancy that it affords, in that the obsolescence of past pop music is both built in and a by-product of this commitment, and thus there is constantly the opportunity for pop music—there is always ‘the present’. There is a cyclicity that grants that the only pop music that has relevance is the pop music *of* the present. From this macro perspective it like an uroboric loop: it is eating its tail. The pop charts seem to reinforce this idea. The Billboard top 10 pop songs for the week July 3, 2010³²⁶ all appear to reference the same sonic palate, and could be said to be ten different ways of manifesting or of highlighting portions of that palate. A side-note: of particular interest is the recent ‘mashup’ (two songs essentially laid over each other, usually an instrumental track and an a cappella that are in complementary keys, or adjusted so as to be) of Ke\$ha’s “Tik Tok” and Katy Perry’s “California Gurls” by

³²⁶ "Pop Songs: Week of July 3, 2010". 04/07/2010. <<http://www.billboard.com/charts/hot-100#/charts/pop-songs?chartDate=2010-07-03>>.

DJ Placeboing.³²⁷ Both of these songs feature in the chart just mentioned. The resultant track expertly highlights how the two songs are undeniably linked through their sound choices, devices, and notation, to the point where it becomes difficult to say of what we hear, which sound is from which song, and raises the question that is nothing short of confusing: What am I actually listening to? DJ Placeboing has said of the track “[a]ll I did was get them to the same tempo, then cut back and forth between the [two] songs [...] occasionally blending. [...] I didn’t use a vocal or instrumental mix—this is just using the full songs”.³²⁸ From this look at the charts, we can postulate that their contents appear more and more as something of a set of permutations, or ‘takes’ on the possibilities of a certain sonic palate, but as soon as that palate could be said to be ascending, by virtue of this, it is simultaneously descending. Pop music is constant one-upmanship, though nothing is ‘said’ in the way that rock music or rap music tries to say something. There is no message; the present does not accommodate the time that it takes to ‘say something’. It is only ‘a presence’, perhaps an innocuous presence, and one that does not challenge anything except perhaps your ability to resist it.

³²⁷ "Tik Tok and California Gurls Are the Same Song?" 10/07/2010.
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2dPA2dCRNY>>. (CD2. Track 6.)

³²⁸ "'Tik Tok' and 'California Gurls' Are the Same Song". 10/07/2010. <<http://www.discopotential.com/?p=724>>.

APPENDIX 1.

A note about the illustrations.

The crudity of the illustrations is deliberate. They are intended only as a guide to understanding the method/s of listening espoused in this thesis. By making the illustrations meet only some minimum requirement/s for the point/s that they are intended to assist, the inaccuracies and questionableness of them can—ideally—be overlooked. They are to a degree to be taken for granted, for as I have shown with regard to sonograms—and in a similar way to lyric analysis—they are *other* than sound, and by labouring over them we lose sight of sound, the object of our analysis.

Something as inherently complicated as the analysis of sound, which requires that all assumptions be made after the fact—from memory—does well to formulate aids, all the while making explicit that said aids are aids only. Their worth is given in the ability that they have to render—in this case—temporal activity into an easily understandable two-dimensional depiction. The aim here is that they will provide the reader with something that they are able to themselves expand and make more detailed in their imagination. Further, they do not reflect any particular work or section of work. They are wholly made-up. Having said that, they do relate to the thesis as a whole in one very crucial way, and that is in focussing on sound's *activity*—for the most part postulated as traversing vectors—rather than as sound qua sound, which resists being transposed into an image.

In representing sound graphically, we circumvent the possibility that information can be lost to memory. With the image, it is always present.

Image Sequence: 'Repetition Blocks'

Part of what occurs when something is being sequentially repeated is that those sequentially repeated phrases/units—as well as their location and accompaniment—are, in a peculiar way, dragged through time by their being repeated sequentially. Although, the *weight* of the previous accompaniments wanes as the repetition continues. The repeated event is 'at hand' mentally in a way wholly different to that of an event being repeated in a non sequential fashion. By way of sequential repetition in regard to the waning of the *weight* of previous accompaniments, the repeating phrase/unit gradually sheds those previous accompaniments and becomes independent of them. When heard later they are merely their own ciphers; they signal their construction, presence, and articulation, through your memory of them. (A prime example of this phenomenon can be found in hip-hop from the mid- to late 1990's, perhaps best exemplified by producers like RZA (Wu-Tang Clan) and DJ Premier (Gang Starr))

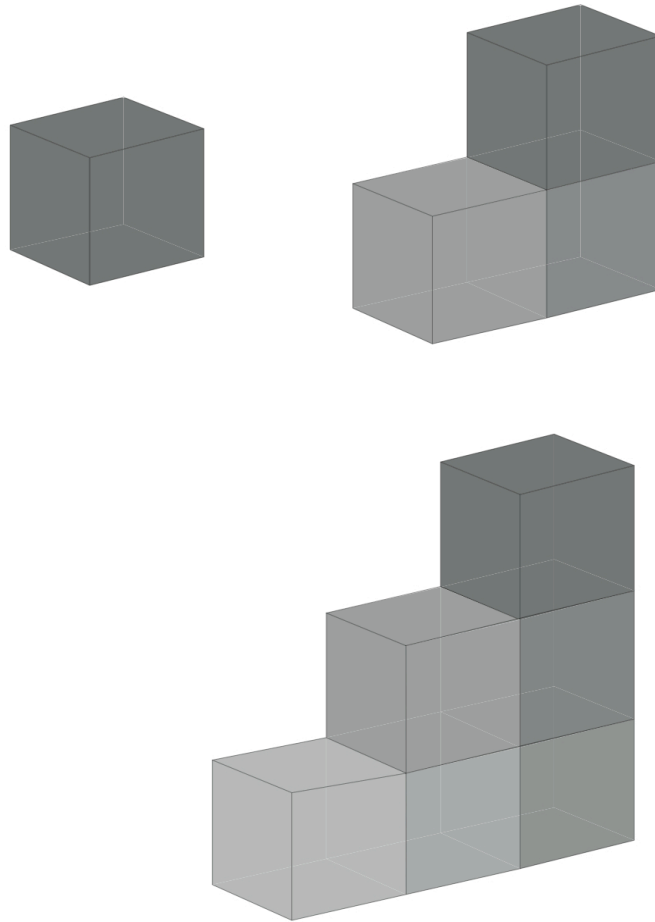


Image 1.

The coloured cube that is Image 1 is intended to represent a unit of repetition: a riff, say. Its length along the Z axis (Time) corresponds to the length of the riff. For the sake of ease let us call this length one bar. It is shaded to suggest that this is both the first instance in a sequence of repetitions, and that it is currently being listened to. The major conceit in this depiction is that it suggests that the whole of the unit is ‘digested’ in a single instance. A perhaps more accurate depiction would be to shade each cube from lightest to darkest along the Z axis, where the darkest instance of the cube corresponds the present which is the farthest point marked on the Z axis. Further to this there is the question of the use of the cube

to depict the unit of repetition. Again, this is merely for the sake of ease, and clearly conflicts with the earlier observation (Chapter 1, part 1.) that a sound's boundary—if sound could be said to have a boundary—is indeterminable, questionable. The cube is simply used to suggest that indeed *some* space is occupied by sound (X/Y axes).

Image 2.

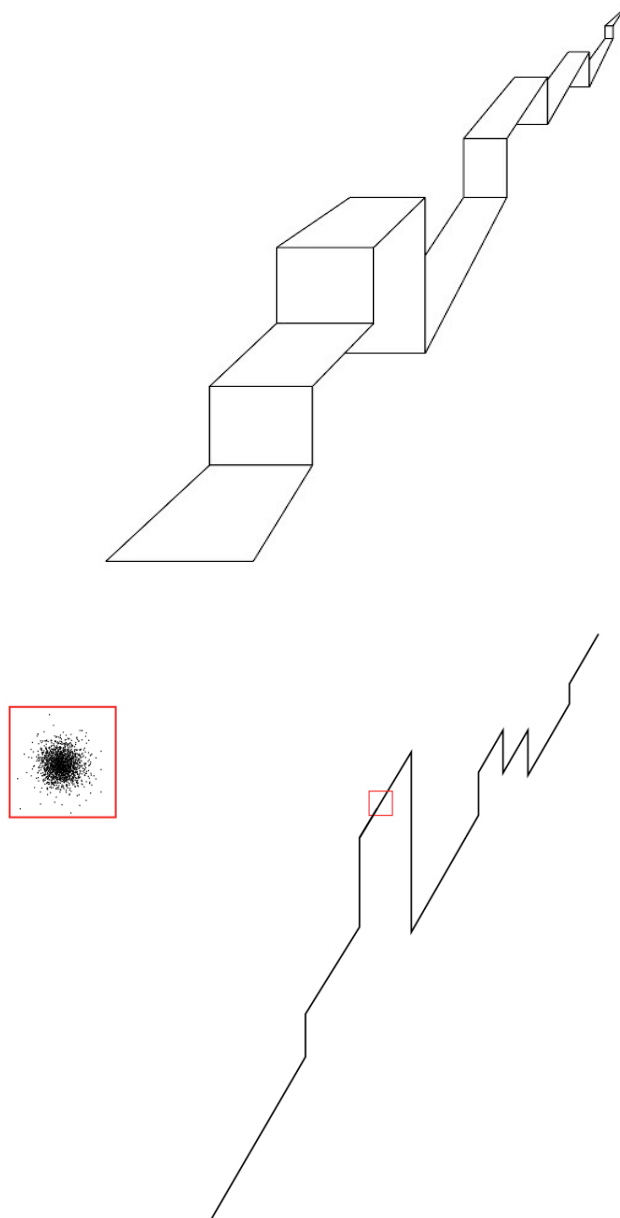
To be clear, the shading of the cubes is designed to show how presently heard sound is more readily memorable than sound that has come before it. Now, this deliberately overlooks whatever may pique a particular listener's interest; this possibility/likelihood is of no concern here. In this image, our unit of repetition is sounding for a second time (the upper right-most cube, beneath which is the cube from Image 1). Here it is heard in light of its just having been heard, which itself was heard without there being anything to reference it to. It is by referencing the current unit against the memory of the first that we say that repetition is occurring. And while it may well be exactly the same as the first instance of its playing—which can be achieved by sampling, for instance—its temporal location differs, which is expressed along the Z axis. Here we can say that the second instance of this unit signals the first. Further to this, the memory of that first instance—so long as the listener's attention is focussed on the present—will have necessarily faded since it was heard some time ago.

Image 3.

This is the third instance of the repetition, and has thus been heard twice before. The shading again depicts the upper right-most cube as the currently heard unit of repetition. The bottom left-most cube is now shown to be a lighter shade than it was in Image 2. This is

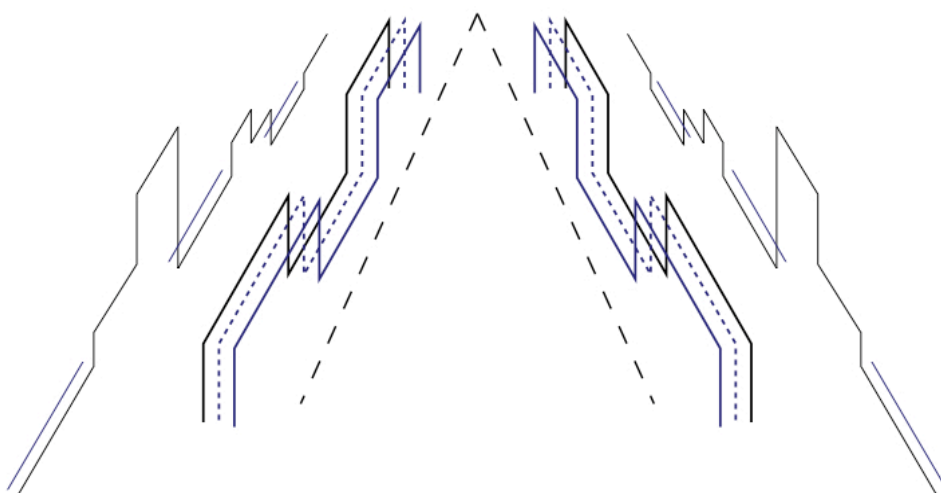
because more time has past since its playing and accordingly the listener's memory of it will have faded proportionally. Repetition is expressed here as a cumulative process, where previous instances of the repetition bolster current and subsequent units. In tandem with the unit's repeating, the listener's memory of that unit is activated.

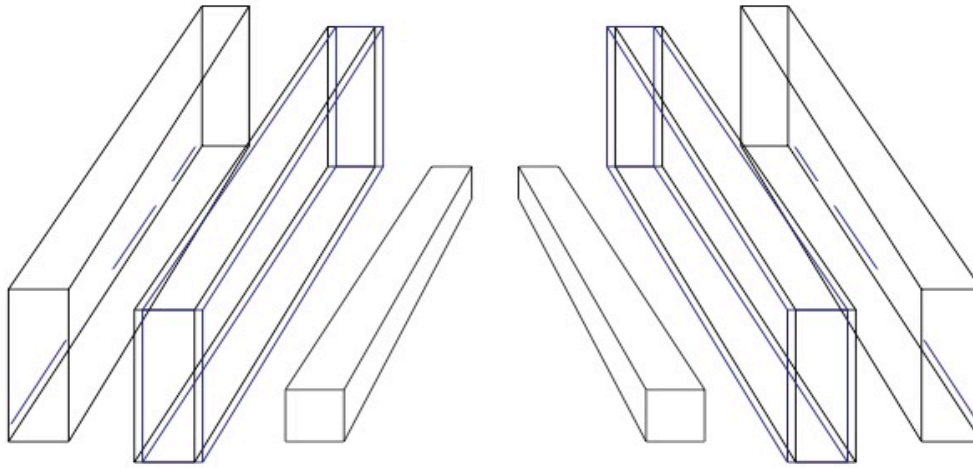
'Note Width' & 'Line Riff Cross-Section'



These are intended as guides for the visualisation of melodic passages, where the plateaux are, at their various heights, intended to show notes being played. In ‘Note Width’ the first note of the passage is the farthest plateau along the Z axis. After this note, a note lower in pitch is played, hence the step-down to another plateau. This shows that events that occur closer to the present are more prominent/memorable. Those at a (time) distance from the present are harder to recall; hence their representation as ‘smaller’. The listener in this scenario would have their back, so to speak, facing the image, with the notes and the memory of those notes fading behind them. The ‘width’ of the notes is, again, just for the sake of ease of representation, though when we look at the image ‘Line Riff Cross-Section’ which removes the ‘width’ we are left with something of a beam. Of course, the vertical lines connecting the plateaux are not sound. So, if we were to take a cross section of a line representing a pitch, we would ‘see’ the attendant image. Here, the question of the sound’s boundary is at least addressed by removing the (imaginary) width.

‘Multi-Lane 1’ & ‘Multi-Lane 2’: The subsumption of detail into more easily grasped, lower-resolution, renderings.



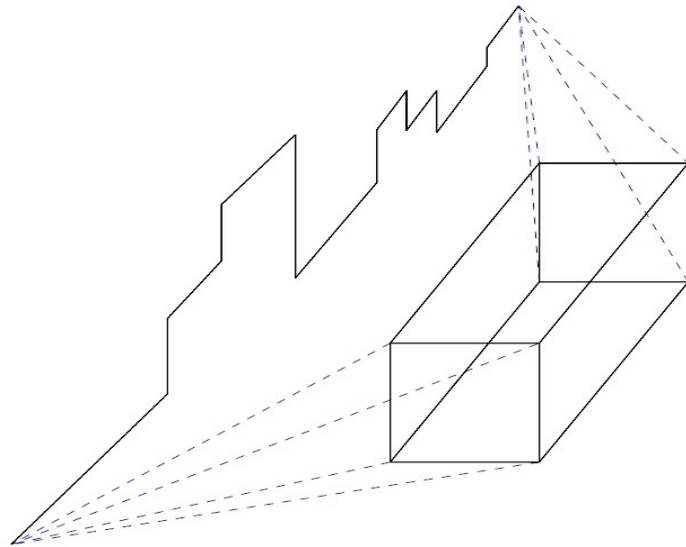


We can think of ‘Multi-Lane 1’ and ‘Multi-Lane 2’ in terms of the principals outlined in ‘Note Width’ and ‘Line Riff Cross-Section.’ In ‘Multi-Lane 1’ we have multiple events occurring simultaneously and here the stereo field is introduced; the left half of the image being the left stereo channel. The different coloured lines are representative of different sounds; the dotted lines through the centre of the image we could think of as some percussion instrument. This image depicts the photograph of a busy, multi-lane city street, taken with an extremely long exposure, mentioned earlier. Here, and for the sake of ease, let us say that the image depicts just one bar. If we were able to listen in this way, then the interrelationship between the elements that make up whichever section is being listened to would be apparent in a way different to that achieved just through listening. That is, without the schematisation that is outlined in the methodology section of this project.

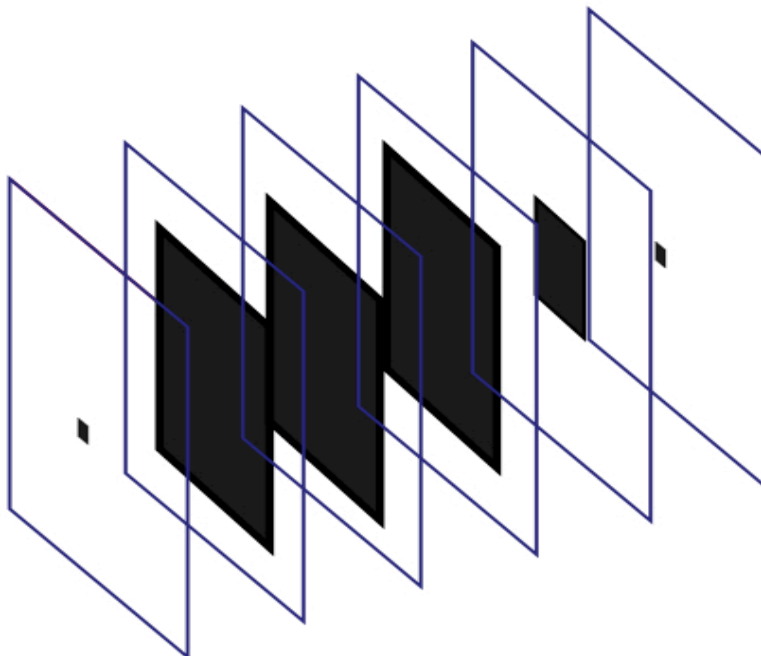
‘Multi-Lane 2’ depicts the same bar from ‘Multi-Lane 1’ though at a lower resolution. Here we have ‘zoomed out’ in order to assess the section from a different vantage point and indeed, we could zoom out even further to display this section as just a cube, a single thing (the image, ‘Line Riff to Block,’ shows a transition similar to that between ‘Multi-Lane 1’ and ‘Multi-Lane 2.’). Similarly, we could ‘zoom in’ on ‘Multi-Lane 1’ to show a much

greater level of detail. Closer in we would observe the connecting tissue between the parts, separated here for ease.

‘Line-Riff to Block’

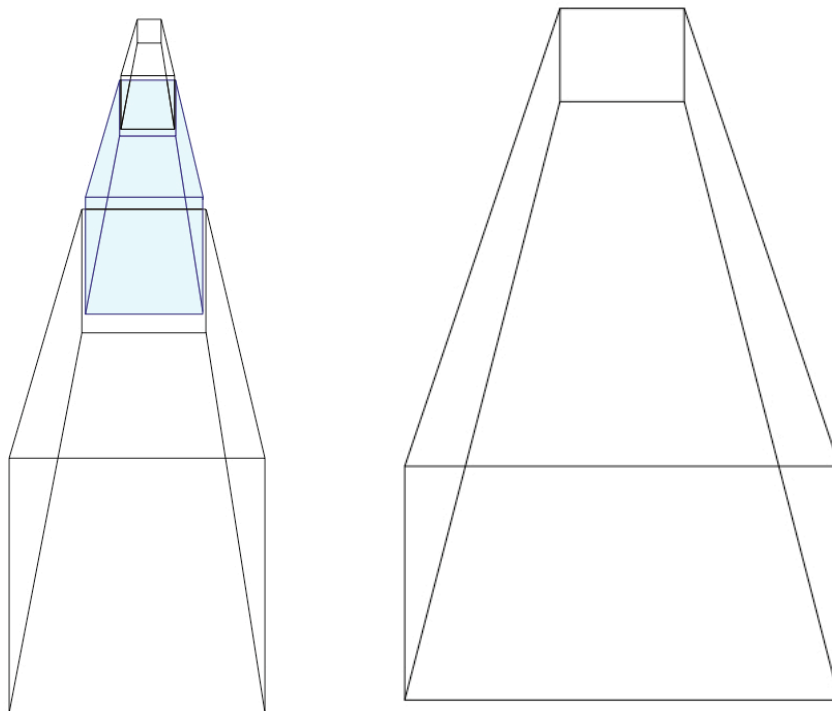


‘Surface/Frames’



‘Surface/Frames’ depicts the ‘flip-book passage’ of sound through time, through consecutive *presents*. Each instant of the present presents the listener with a different sound, or aspect of a sound, and different sound relationships. The ‘frames’ of the diagram are analogous to these consecutive presents—to their surfaces—and the squares within the frames are indicative of the sound that each presents. It is a cross-section of sound through time. In this case, the squares are an attempt to show what a typical kick-drum sound would ‘look’ like when cross-sectioned in this manner.

Lastly, parallel cache memory listening is essentially listening in a way that would generate an image similar to that of ‘Multi-Lane 1’ as parsed via the cross-section imaging of ‘surface/frames,’ combined with ‘Multi-Lane 2,’ combined with ‘ABA’ (below left) and lastly with ‘Whole’ (below right).



We can think of ‘ABA’ as similar to verse/chorus/verse, and ‘Whole’ as representing/containing the whole of the song. The images in this appendix depict the various caches mentioned earlier, as well as some of the intermediate resolutions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

- Abbate, Carolyn. "Music - Drastic or Gnostic?" Critical Inquiry 30.3 (2005): 505-36.
- Adorno, Theodor W. "The Form of the Phonograph Record." October 55 (1990): 56-61.
- . "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." The Culture Industry. Ed. J. M. Bernstein. London: Routledge, 2007. 29-60.
- Alloway, Lawrence. "The Arts and the Mass Media." Art in Theory 1900-2000. Ed. Charles Harrison Paul Wood. 2003: Blackwell, 1958. 715-17.
- Atkins, Juan and 3MB. "Jazz Is the Teacher." Metroplex, 1993.
- Attali, Jacques. Noise. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: Minnesota 1989.
- Barrett, Lindon. "(Further) Figures of Violence: "The Street" In the American Landscape." Cultural Critique. 25 (1993): 205-37.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." Trans. Steven Heath. Image, Music, Text. London: Fontana, 1977.
- . "The Grain of the Voice." Image, Music, Text. London: Fontana, 1977. 179-89.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Eiffel Tower." A Barthes Reader Ed. Susan Sontag. London: Vintage, 1993.
- Baudrillard, Jean. Simulations. Trans. Paul Foss Philip Beitchman, Paul Patton. Foreign Agents. New York: Semiotext[e], 1983.
- . In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities. Trans. John Johnston Paul Foss, Paul Patton, Andrew Berardini. Foreign Agents. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007.
- Bayliss, C. A. "Universals, Communicable Knowledge, and Metaphysics." Universals and Particulars. Ed. Michael J. Loux. New York: Anchor, 1970.
- Benicewicz, Larry. "Remembering Bert Frilot (1939-1999)". 17/04/2009.
<<http://www.bluesworld.com/BFRILOT.HTML>>.
- Berger, Karol. "Musicology According to Don Giovanni, Or: Should We Get Drastic?" The Journal of Musicology 22.3 (2005): 490-501.

- Boretz, Benjamin. "Experience with No Names." Perspectives of New Music 30.1 (1992): 272-83.
- Born, Georgina. "Modern Music Culture: On Shock, Pop and Synthesis." Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies Vol 4: Music and Identity. Ed. Simon Frith. Vol. 4. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Boyle, J. David, Glenn L. Hosterman, and Darhyl S. Ramsey. "Factors Influencing Pop Music Preferences of Young People." Journal of Research in Music Education 29.1 (1981): 47-55.
- Brown, Lee B. "Phonography, Rock Records, and the Ontology of Recorded Music." The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 58.4 (2000): 361-72.
- Brown, Mick. Tearing Down the Wall of Sound: The Rise and Fall of Phil Spector. London: Bloomsbury, 2008.
- Calcagno, Mauro. "Signifying Nothing: On the Aesthetics of Pure Voice in Early Venetian Opera" The Journal of Musicology 20.4 (2003): 461-97.
- Carroll, Noël. Beyond Aesthetics. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001.
- Chambers, Iain. "Some Critical Tracks." Popular Music 2 (1982): 19-36.
- Cleveland, Barry. Joe Meek's Bold Techniques. Vallejo: MixBooks, 2001.
- Cohn, Nik. Awopbopalooobop Alopbamboom. Aylesbury: Paladin, 1972.
- Cook, Nicholas. "Theorizing Musical Meaning." Music theory spectrum 23.2 (2001): 170-95.
- Corbett, John. "Free, Single, and Disengaged: Listening Pleasure and the Popular Music Object." October 54 (1990): 79-101.
- Cordell, Frank. "Gold Pan Alley." The Faber Book of Pop. Ed. Hanif Kureishi and Jon Savage. London: Faber and Faber, 1995. 72-77.
- Cunningham, Mark. Good Vibrations: A History of Record Production. Surrey: Castle Communications 1996.
- Curtis, James M. "Toward a Sociotechnological Interpretation of Popular Music in the Electronic Age." Technology and Culture 25.1 (1984): 91-102.
- Danto, Arthur C. The Transfiguration of the Commonplace. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996.
- Dawson, Jim and Steve Propes. 45 Rpm: The History, Heroes & Villains of a Pop

- Music Revolution. San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2003.
- Dehò, Valerio. "Top of the Pops." Trans. David Smith. Sound Zero: Art and Music from Pop to Street Art. Ed. Valerio Dehò. Bologna: Graphiche Damiani, 2006.
- Deleuze, Gilles. Difference and Repetition. Trans. Paul Patton. London: The Athlone Press, 1994.
- . Difference and Repetition. Trans. Paul Patton. London: Continuum, 2004.
- Dellaria, Michael. "Some Recorded Thoughts on Recorded Objects." Perspectives of New Music 33.1/2 (1995): 192-207.
- Demers, Joanna. "Sampling the 1970s in Hip-Hop." Popular Music 22.1 (2003): 41-56.
- Derrida, Jaques. Writing and Difference. 1978. Trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Dolfsma, Wilfred. "The Consumption of Music and the Expression of Values: A Social Economic Explanation for the Advent of Pop Music." American Journal of Economics and Sociology 58.4 (1999): 1019-46.
- Dowd, Timothy J. "Concentration and Diversity Revisited: Production Logics and the U.S. Mainstream Recording Market, 1940-1990." Social Forces 82.4 (2004): 1411-55.
- Dunbar-Hall, Peter. "Semiotics as a Method for the Study of Popular Music." International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music 22.2 (1991): 127-32.
- Edwards, Emily D. "Does Love Really Stink?" Adolescents and Their Music. Ed. Jonathan S. Epstein. New York: Garland, 1994.
- Eisenberg, Evan. The Recording Angel. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale U.P., 2005.
- Evans, Edwin. "The Knell of Romanticism." The Musical Times 70.1042 (1929): 1119.
- Feld, Steven and Fox, Aaron A. "Music and Language." Annual Review of Anthropology 23 (1994): 25-53.
- Fink, Robert. "Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the Twilight of the Canon." American Music 16.2 (1998): 135-79.
- Fornäs, Johan. "Moving Rock: Youth and Pop in Late Modernity." Popular Music 9.3 (1990): 291-306.
- . "The Future of Rock: Discourses That Struggle to Define a Genre." Popular Music

14.1 (1995): 111-25.

Frith, Simon. The Sociology of Rock. London: Constable, 1978.

---. "'the Magic That Can Set You Free': The Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community." Popular Music 1 (1981): 159-68.

---. Music for Pleasure : Essays in the Sociology of Pop. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.

---. Performing Rites. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996.

---. "Pop Music." The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock. Ed. Will Straw Simon Frith, John Street. Cambridge: Cambridge, 2001. 93-108.

Frith, Simon, Will Straw and John Street, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Pop & Rock. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P, 2001.

Frith, Simon. "Art Vs Technology." Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies Vol.2, the Rock Era. Ed. Simon. Frith. London: Routledge, 2004. 107-22.

Frith, Simon. "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music." Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Vol 4: Music and Identity. Ed. Simon Frith. London: Routledge, 2004.

---, ed. Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. 4 vols. London: Routledge, 2004.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Eminent Text and Its Truth." The Bulletin of Midwest Modern Language Association 13.1 (1980): 3-10.

Garofalo, Reebee. "How Autonomous Is Relative: Popular Music, the Social Formation and Cultural Struggle." Popular Music 6.1 (1987): 77-92.

---. "From Music Publishing to Mp3: Music and Industry in the Twentieth Century." American Music 17.3 (1999): 318-54.

Gibson, David. The Art of Mixing: A Visual Guide to Recording, Editing, and Production. Vallejo: MixBooks, 1997.

Gillett, Charlie. The Sound of the City. London: Sphere Books Limited, 1971.

Gracyk, Theodore. Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock. Durham: Duke U.P, 1996.

---. "Valuing and Evaluating Popular Music." The Journal of Aesthetics and Art

Criticism 57.2 (1999): 205-20.

Griffiths, Dai. "The High Analysis of Low Music." Music Analysis 18.3 (1999): 389-435.

Grossberg, Lawrence. "Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock and Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life." Popular Music 4 (1984): 225-58.

---. "Putting the Pop Back into Postmodernism." Social Text 21 (1989): 167-90.

Hanninen, Dora A. "A Theory of Recontextualization in Music: Analyzing Phenomenal Transformations of Repetition." Music Theory Spectrum 25.1 (2003): 59-97.

Hawkins, Stan. "Perspectives in Popular Musicology: Music, Lennox, and Meaning in 1990s Pop." Popular Music 15.1 (1996): 17-36.

Hebdige, Dick. Hiding in the Light : On Images and Things. London: Routledge, 1988.

---. "Training Some Thoughts on the Future." Mapping the Futures. New York: Routledge, 1993. 270-9.

Heidegger, Martin. What Is a Thing? Trans. W.B. Barton. Jr and Vera Deutsch. Indiana: Regnery/Gateway, Inc., 1967.

Hennion, Antoine. "The Production of Success: An Anti-Musicology of the Pop Song." Popular Music 3 (1983): 159-93.

Holm-Hudson, Kevin. "Quotation and Context: Sampling and John Oswald's Plunderphonics." Leonardo Music Journal 7 (1997): 17-25.

Horning, Susan S. "Engineering the Performance: Recording Engineers, Tacit Knowledge and the Art of Controlling Sound." Social Studies of Science 34.5 (2004): 703-31.

Jameson, Fredric. "Metacommentary." PMLA 86.1 (1971): 9-18.

---. Prison-House of Language. Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1972.

---. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." Social Text 1 (1979): 130-48.

Jasper, Tony. Understanding Pop. London: SCM Press, 1972.

Jones, Gaynor and Jay Rahn. "Definitions of Popular Music: Recycled." Journal of Aesthetic Education 11.4 (1977): 79-92.

Kania, Andrew. "Making Tracks: The Ontology of Rock Music." The Journal of

- Aesthetics and Art Criticism 64.4 (2006): 401-14.
- Kelsey, Franklyn. "The Nature of the Singing Voice." Music & Letters 32.2 (1951): 140-46.
- Kerman, Joseph. "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out." Critical Inquiry 7.2 (1980): 311-31.
- . Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1985.
- Krauss, Rosalind E. The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987.
- Kureishi, Hanif and Jon Savage, ed. The Faber Book of Pop. London: Faber and Faber, 1995.
- Landy, Leigh. "Reviewing the Musicology of Electroacoustic Music: A Plea for Greater Triangulation." Organized Sound 4.1 (1999): 61-70.
- Lee, Stephen. "Re-Examining the Concept of the 'Independent' Record Company: The Case of Wax Trax! Records." Popular Music 14.1 (1995): 13-31.
- Lefebvre, Henri. Everyday Life in the Modern World. Trans. Sacha Rabinovitch. Harper Torchbooks Tb1608. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- Levitin, Daniel J. This Is Your Brain on Music. New York: Plume, 2007.
- Marcus, Greil. Lipstick Traces : A Secret History of the Twentieth Century. Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1989.
- May, Keith M. Nietzsche: On the Struggle between Knowledge and Wisdom. New York: St. Martins Press, 1993.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Eye and Mind." Aesthetics. Ed. Harold Osborne. London: Oxford U.P., 1972. 55-85.
- Middleton, Richard. "'Play It Again Sam': Some Notes on the Productivity of Repetition in Popular Music." Popular Music 3.Producers and Markets (1983): 235-70.
- . "Articulating Musical Meaning/Re-Constructing Musical History/Locating the 'Popular'." Popular Music 5.Continuity and Change (1985): 5-43.
- . Studying Popular Music. Milton Keynes: Open U.P., 1990.
- . "Popular Music Analysis and Musicology: Bridging the Gap." Popular Music 12.2

(1993): 177-90.

Mitchell, Tony. "Performance and the Postmodern in Pop Music." Theatre Journal 41.3 (1989): 273-93.

Moore, Allan. "Authenticity as Authentication." Popular Music 21.2 (2002): 209-23.

Moore, Alan F. "Catagoricalconventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre." Music & Letters 82.3 (2001): 432-42.

Morley, Paul. "A Salmon Screams." The Faber Book of Pop. Ed. Hanif Kureishi and Jon Savage. London: Faber & Faber, 1995. 551-59.

---. Words and Music. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.

Murphy, Paul. "Those That Know." The Musical Times 135.1818 (1994): 485.

Owens, C. "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism: Part 2." OCTOBER 13 (1980): 67-86.

Parker, Martin. "Reading the Charts - Making Sense with the Hit Parade." Popular Music 10.2 (1991): 205-17.

Peterson, Richard A. "Why 1955? Explaining the Advent of Rock Music." Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies Vol.2, the Rock Era. Ed. Simon. Frith. Vol. 2. London: Routledge, 2004.

---. "Why 1955? Explaining the Advent of Rock Music." Popular Music. Ed. Simon. Frith, 2004. 97-116.

Peterson, Richard A. and David G. Berger. "Cycles in Symbol Production: The Case of Popular Music." American Sociological Review 40.2 (1975): 158-73.

Plasketes, George. "Re-Flections on the Cover Age: A Collage of Continuous Coverage in Popular Music." Popular Music 28.2 (2005): 137-61.

Poss, Robert M. "Distortion Is Truth." Leonardo Music Journal 8 (1998): 45-48.

Poster, Merk, ed. Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings. Stanford: Stanford, 1988.

R., Ken. The Second Jingle Book. n.p: Ken R. LLC, 2004.

---. The Jingle Book. n.p: Ken R. LLC, [2006].

Ramachandran, Vilayanur S. "The Artful Brain: Reith Lectures". 2003. 04/07/2009. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003/lecture3.shtml>>.

Redd, Lawrence N. "Rock! It's Still Rhythm and Blues." The Black Perspective in Music 13.1 (1985): 31-47.

- Regev, Motti. "Producing Artistic Value: The Case of Rock Music." The Sociological Quarterly 35.1 (1994): 85-102.
- Reynolds, Simon. Bring the Noise. London: Faber & Faber, 2007.
- Rothenbuhler, Eric W. and John Durham Peters. "Defining Phonography: An Experiment in Theory." The Musical Quarterly 81.2 (1997): 242-62.
- Russell, Dave. "The 'Social History' of Popular Music: A Label without a Cause?" Popular Music 12.2 (1993): 139-54.
- Savage, Jon. Time Travel: Pop, Media and Sexuality 1976-96. London: Chatto & Windus, 1996.
- . Teenage: The Creation of Youth 1875-1945. London: Chatto and Windus, 2007.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. The World as Will and Representation. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. Vol. 2. New York: Dover, 1966.
- Scott, Derek B. "Music and Sociology for the 1990s: A Changing Critical Perspective." The Musical Quarterly 74.3 (1990): 385-410.
- Scott, Linda M. "Understanding Jingles and Needledrop: A Rhetorical Approach to Music in Advertising." The Journal of Consumer Research 17.2 (1990): 223-36.
- Seigworth, Gergory J. "Banality for Cultural Studies." Cultural studies 14.2 (2000): 227-68.
- Shepherd, John. "Music, Culture and Interdisciplinarity: Reflections on Relationships." Popular Music 13.2 (1994): 127-41.
- Smalley, Denis. "Spectromorphology: Explaining Sound-Shapes." Organized Sound 2.2 (1997): 107-26.
- Souster, Tim. "Notes on Pop Music." Tempo.87 (1968): 2-6.
- Stockhausen, Karlheinz. Stockhausen on Music. Ed. Robin Maconie. London: Marion Boyars, 2000.
- Székely, Michael. "Pushing the Popular, or, toward a Compositional Popular Aesthetics." Popular Music and Society 29.1 (2006): 91-108.
- Tagg, Philip. "Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice." Popular Music 2.Theory and Method (1982): 37-67.
- . "From Refrain to Rave: The Decline of Figure and the Rise of Ground." Popular Music 13.2 (1994): 209-22.

Toffler, Alvin. Future Shock. New York: Random House, 1970.

Wallach, Jeremy. "The Poetics of Electrosonic Presence: Recorded Music and the Materiality of Sound." Journal of Popular Music Studies 15.1 (2003): 34-64.

Weinstein, Deena. "Rock: Youth and Its Music " Adolescents and Their Music. Ed. Jonathan S. Epstein. New York: Garland, 1994.

Weiss, Frederick G., ed. Hegel: The Essential Writings. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Philosophical Investigations. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

Zurbugg, Nicholas., ed. Jean Baudrillard : Art and Artefact. London: Sage, 1997.

+ -

ELECTRONIC AND AUDIO/VISUAL MATERIAL.

"1997 Shortlist - Barclaycard Mercury Prize". 03/01/2010.
 <<http://www.mercuryprize.com/aoty/shortlist.php?Year=1997>>.

"Articles/Talks". 17/04/2012.
 <<http://www.philipbrophy.com/projects/rstff/music.html>>.

"Cry Me a River - Justin Timberlake". 15/01/2010.
 <<http://www.billboard.com/song/justin-timberlake/cry-me-a-river/4260166#/song/justin-timberlake/cry-me-a-river/4260166>>.

"Pop Songs: Week of July 3, 2010". 04/07/2010.
 <<http://www.billboard.com/charts/hot-100#/charts/pop-songs?chartDate=2010-07-03>>.

"Riaa Gold and Platinum". 03/01/2010.
 <<http://riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php?table=tblTop100>>.

"Tik Tok and California Gurls Are the Same Song?" 10/07/2010.
 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2dPA2dCRNY>>.

"'Tik Tok' and 'California Gurls' Are the Same Song". 10/07/2010.

<<http://www.discopotential.com/?p=724>>.

*NSYNC. Celebrity. Jive, 2001.

---. "Pop." Celebrity. Jive, 2001.

Aguilera, Christina. "Not Myself Tonight." RCA, 2010.

Beyoncé. I Am... Sasha Fierce. Columbia, 2008.

Bieber, Justin (feat. Ludacris). "Baby." My World 2.0. Island, 2010.

Bowie, David. "Space Oddity." The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars. RCA, 1972.

Cher, Sonny and. "The Beat Goes On." In Case You're in Love. Atco Records, 1967.

Cyrus, Miley. "Party in the USA." Hollywood, 2009.

Destiny's Child. "Lose My Breath." Columbia, 2004.

Gaga, Lady. "Bad Romance." The Fame Monster. Interscope, 2009.

---. "Telephone." The Fame Monster. Interscope, 2009.

Honeycombs, The. "Have I the Right?" Pye Records, 1964.

KESHA. "Tik Tok." Tik Tok. RCA, 2009.

Madlib. "Left on Silverlake (Ride)." The Beat Konducta Vol. 1-2. Stones Throw, 2006.

Madonna. Like a Prayer. Sire, 1989.

---. Hard Candy. Warner Bros., 2008.

Minogue, Kylie. "In My Arms." X. Parlophone, 2007.

Morley, Paul, Writer/Presenter. Pop! What is it Good For? Dir. Connolly, Mike. BBC Scotland, 2008.

Osborne, Kelly. "Papa Don't Preach." Epic, 2002.

Parks, Van Dyke. "All the Golden." Song Cycle. Warner Bros., 1968.

Sinitta. "Toy Boy." Fanfare Records, 1987.

Spears, Britney. "The Beat Goes On." ...Baby One More Time. Jive, 1999.

---. "I Love Rock 'N' Roll." Britney. Jive, 2001.

---. "Gimme More." Blackout. Zomba Recording LLC, 2007.

---. "Toy Soldiers." Blackout. Zomba Recording LLC, 2007.

Stefani, Gwen. "Rich Girl." Love.Angel.Music.Baby. Interscope, 2004.

Žižek, Slavoj, Writer/Presenter. The Pervert's Guide to Cinema. Dir. Sophie Fiennes. DVD. Amoeba Films, 2009.

+ -

CD.1 TRACK LIST.

1. The Honeycombs. "Have I the Right?"
2. Van Dyke Parks. "All the Golden."
3. Madlib. "Left on Silverlake (Ride)."
4. Britney Spears. "The Beat Goes On."
5. KESHA. "Tik Tok."
6. Sinitta. "Toy Boy."
7. *NSYNC. "Pop."
8. Britney Spears. "I Love Rock n Roll."
9. Britney Spears. "Toy Soldiers."
10. Destiny's Child. "Lose My Breath."
11. Miley Cyrus. "Party In the USA."

+ -

CD.2 TRACK LIST.

1. Britney Spears. "Gimme More."
2. Christina Aguilera. "Not Myself Tonight."
3. Lady Gaga. "Telephone."
4. Kylie Minogue. "In My Arms."
5. David Bowie. "Space Oddity."
6. DJ PLACEBOING. "Tik Tok and California Gurls Are the Same Song?"
7. Justin Bieber (feat. Ludacris). "Baby."